AMERICAN POETRY

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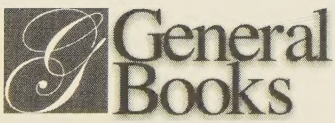

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AMERICAN POETRY

A FOREWORD

When the first Miscellany of American Poetry appeared in 1920, innumerable were the questions asked by both readers and reviewers of publishers and contributors alike. The modest note on the jacket appeared to satisfy no one. The volume purported to have no editor, yet a collection without an editor was pronounced preposterous. It was obviously not the organ of a school, yet it did not seem to have been compiled to exploit any particular phase of American life; neither Nature, Love, Patriotism, Propaganda, nor Philosophy could be acclaimed as its reason for being, and it was certainly not intended, as has been so frequent of late, to bring a cheerful absence of mind to the world-weary during an unoccupied ten minutes. Again, it was exclusive not inclusive, since its object was, evidently, not the meritorious if impossible one of attempting to be a compendium of present-day American verse.

But the publishers note had stated one thing quite clearly, that the Miscellany was to be a biennial. Two years have passed, and with the second volume it has seemed best to state at once the reasons which actuated its contributors to join in such a venture.

In the first place, the plan of the Miscellany is frankly imitative. For some years now there has been published in England an anthology entitled Georgian Poetry. The Miscellany is intended to be an American companion to that publication. The

dissimilarities of temperament, range and choice of subjects are manifest, but the outstanding difference is this: Georgian Poetry has an editor, and the poems it contains may be taken as that editors reaction to the poetry of the day. The Miscellany, on the other hand, has no editor; it is no one persons choice which forms it; it is not an attempt to throw into relief any particular group or stress any particular tendency. It does disclose the most recent work of certain representative figures in contemporary American literature. The poets who appear here have come together by mutual accord and, although they may invite others to join them in subsequent volumes as circumstance dictates, each one stands (as all newcomers also must stand) as the exponent of fresh and strikingly diverse qualities in our native poetry. It is as if a dozen unacademic painters, separated by temperament and distance, were to arrange to have an exhibition every two years of their latest work. They would not pretend that they were the only painters worthy of a public showing; they would maintain that their work was, generally speaking, most interesting to one another. Their gallery would necessarily be limited; but it would be flexible enough to admit, with every fresh exhibit, three or four new members who had achieved an importance and an idiom of their own. This is just what the original contributors to the Miscellany have done.

The newcomers–H. D., Alfred Kreymborg, and Edna St. Vincent Millay–have taken their places with the same absence of judge or jury that marks any " society of independents." There is no hanging committee; no organizer of "position." Two years ago the alphabet determined the arrangement; this time seniority has been the sole arbiter of precedence. Furthermore–and this can not be too often repeated–there has been no editor. To be painstakingly precise, each contributor has been his own editor. As such, he has chosen his own selections and determined the order in which they are to be printed, but he has had no authority over either the choice or grouping of his fellow exhibitors contributions. To one of the members has been delegated the merely mechanical labors of assembling, proof-reading, and seeing the volume through the press. The absence of E. A. Robinson from this years Miscellany is a source of regret not only to all the contributors but to the poet himself. Mr. Robinson has written nothing since his Collected Poems with the exception of a long poem–a volume in itself–but he hopes to appear in any subsequent collection.

It should be added that this is not a haphazard anthology of picked-over poetry. The poems that follow are new. They are new not only in the sense that (with two exceptions) they cannot be found in book form, but most of them have never previously been published. Certain of the selections have appeared in recent magazines and these are reprinted by permission of The Century, The Yale Review, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, The New Republic, Harpers, Scribners, The Bookman, The Freeman, Broom, The Dial, The Atlantic Monthly, Farm and Fireside, The Measure, and The Literary Review. Vachel Lindsays " I Know All This When Gipsy Fiddles Cry " is a revised version of the poem of that name which was printed in The Enchanted Years.

LILACS
Lilacs,
False blue,
White,

Purple,
Color of lilac,
Your great puffs of flowers
Are everywhere in this my New England.
Among your heart-shaped leaves
Orange orioles hop like music-box birds and sing
Their little weak soft songs; In the crooks of your branches
The bright eyes of song sparrows sitting on spotted eggs
Peer restlessly through the light and shadow
Of all Springs.
Lilacs in dooryards
Holding quiet conversations with an early moon;
Lilacs watching a deserted house
Settling sideways into the grass of an old road;
Lilacs, wind-beaten, staggering under a lopsided shock of bloom
Above a cellar dug into a hill.
You are everywhere.
You were everywhere.
You tapped the window when the preacher preached his sermon, And ran along the road beside the boy going to school.

You stood by pasture-bars to give the cows good milking, You persuaded the housewife that her dish-pan was of silver
And her husband an image of pure gold.
You flaunted the fragrance of your blossoms
Through the wide doors of Custom Houses–
You, and sandal-wood, and tea,
Charging the noses of quill-driving clerks
When a ship was in from China.
You called to them: " Goose-quill men, goose-quill men,
May is a month for flitting,"
Until they writhed on their high stools
And wrote poetry on their letter-sheets behind the propped-up ledgers. Paradoxical New England clerks, Writing inventories in ledgers, reading the " Song of
Solomon " at night,
So many verses before bedtime,
Because it was the Bible.
The dead fed you
Amid the slant stones of graveyards.
Pale ghosts who planted you
Came in the night time
And let their thin hair blow through your clustered stems.
You are of the green sea,
And of the stone hills which reach a long distance.
You are of elm-shaded streets with little shops where they sell kites and marbles,
You are of great parks where every one walks and nobody is at home.

You cover the blind sides of greenhouses
And lean over the top to say a hurry-word through the glass
To your friends, the grapes, inside.
Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Color of lilac,
You have forgotten your Eastern origin,
The veiled women with eyes like panthers,
The swollen, aggressive turbans of jeweled Pashas.
Now you are a very decent flower,
A reticent flower,
A curiously clear-cut, candid flower,
Standing beside clean doorways,
Friendly to a house-cat and a pair of spectacles,
Making poetry out of a bit of moonlight
And a hundred or two sharp blossoms.
Maine knows you,
Has for years and years;
New Hampshire knows you,
And Massachusetts
And Vermont.
Cape Cod starts you along the beaches to Rhode Island;
Connecticut takes you from a river to the sea.
You are brighter than apples,
Sweeter than tulips,
You are the great flood of cur souls
Bursting above the leaf-shapes of our hearts,
You are the smell of all Summers,
The love of wives and children,
The recollection of the gardens of little children,
You are State Houses and Charters
And the familiar treading of the foot to and fro on a road it knows.
May is lilac here in New England,
May is a thrush singing "Sun up!" on a tip-top ash-tree,
May is white clouds behind pine-trees
Puffed out and marching upon a blue sky.
May is a green as no other,
May is much sun through small leaves,
May is soft earth,
And apple-blossoms,
And windows open to a South wind.
May is a full light wind of lilac
From Canada to Narragansett Bay.

Lilacs,
False blue,
White,
Purple,
Color of lilac,
Heart-leaves of lilac all over New England,
Roots of lilac under all the soil of New England,
Lilac in me because I am New England,
Because my roots are in it,
Because my leaves are of it,
Because my flowers are for it,
Because it is my country
And I speak to it of itself
And sing of it with my own voice
Since certainly it is mine.

TWENTY-FOUR HOKKU ON A MODERN THEME

Again the larkspur,
Heavenly blue in my garden.
They, at least, unchanged.
How have I hurt you?
You look at me with pale eyes,
But these are my tears.
Ill
Morning and evening–
Yet for us once long ago
Was no division.
I hear many words.
Set an hour when I may come
Or remain silent.
In the ghostly dawn
I write new words for your ears–
Even now you sleep.
This then is morning.
Have you no comfort for me
Cold-colored flowers?
VII
My eyes are weary
Following you everywhere.
Short, oh short, the days!
VIII
When the flower falls
The leaf is no more cherished.
Every day I fear.
Even when you smile Sorrow is behind your eyes. Pity me, therefore.
Laugh–it is nothing.

To others you may seem gay, I watch with grieved eyes.
Take it, this white rose.
Stems of roses do not bleed;
Your fingers are safe.

XII

As a river-wind
Hurling clouds at a bright moon,
So am I to you.

XIII

Watching the iris,
The faint and fragile petals–
How am I worthy?

XIV

Down a red river I drift in a broken skiff.
Are you then so brave?
Night lies beside me
Chaste and cold as a sharp sword.
It and I alone.

XVI

Last night it rained.
Now, in the desolate dawn,
Crying of blue jays.

XVII

Foolish so to grieve,
Autumn has its colored leaves–
But before they turn?

XVIII

Afterwards I think:
Poppies bloom when it thunders.
Is this not enough?

XIX

Love is a game–yes?
I think it is a drowning:
Black willows and stars.

When the aster fades
The creeper flaunts in crimson.
Always another!

XXI

Turning from the page,
Blind with a night of labor,
I hear morning crows.

XXII

A cloud of lilies,
Or else you walk before me.
Who could see clearly?

XXIII
Sweet smell of wet flowers
Over an evening garden.
Your portrait, perhaps?
XXIV
Staying in my room, I thought of the new Spring leaves.
That day was happy.
THE SWANS
The swans float and float
Along the moat
Around the Bishops garden,
And the white clouds push
Across a blue sky
With edges that seem to draw in and harden.
Two slim men of white bronze
Beat each with a hammer on the end of a rod
The hours of God.
Striking a bell,
They do it well.
And the echoes jump, and tinkle, and swell In the Cathedrals carved stone polygons.
The swans float
About the moat,
And another swan sits still in the air
Above the old inn.
He gazes into the street
And swims the cold and the heat, /
He has always been there,
At least so say the cobbles in the square.
They listen to the beat
Of the hammered bell,
And think of the feet
Which beat upon their tops;
But what they think they do not tell.
And the swans who float
Up and down the moat
Gobble the bread the Bishop feeds them.
The slim bronze men beat the hour again,
But only the gargoyles up in the hard blue air heed
them.
When the Bishop says a prayer,
And the choir sing " Amen,"
The hammers break in on them there:
Clang! Clang! Beware! Beware!
The carved swan looks down at the passing men,
And the cobbles wink: " An hour has gone again."

But the people kneeling before the Bishops chair
Forget the passing over the cobbles in the square.
An hour of day and an hour of night,
And the clouds float away in a red-splashed light.
The sun, quotha? or white, white
Smoke with fire all alight.
An old roof crashing on a Bishops tomb,
Swarms of men with a thirst for room,
And the footsteps blur to a shower, shower, shower,
Of men passing–passing–every hour,
With arms of power, and legs of power,
And power in their strong, hard minds.
No need then
For the slim bronze men
Who beat Gods hours: Prime, Tierce, None.
Who wants to hear? No one.
We will melt them, and mold them,
And make them a stem
For a banner gorged with blood,
For a blue-mouthed torch.
So the men rush like clouds,
They strike their iron edges on the Bishops chair
And fling down the lanterns by the tower stair.
They rip the Bishop out of his tomb
And break the mitre off of his head.
"See," say they, " the man is dead;
He cannot shiver or sing.
Well toss for his ring."
The cobbles see this all along the street
Coming–coming–on countless feet.
And the clockmen mark the hours as they go.
But slow–slow–
The swans float In the Bishops moat.
And the inn swan
Sits on and on,
Staring before him with cold glass eyes.
Only the Bishop walks serene,
Pleased with his church, pleased with his house,
Pleased with the sound of the hammered bell,
Beating his doom.
Saying " Boom! Boom! Room! Room!"
He is old, and kind, and deaf, and blind,
And very, very pleased with his charming moat
And the swans which float.
PRIME

Your voice is like bells over roofs at dawn
When a bird flies
And the sky changes to a fresher color.
Speak, speak, Beloved.
Say little things
For my ears to catch
And run with them to my heart.

VESPERS

Last night, at sunset,
The foxgloves were like tall altar candles.
Could I have lifted you to the roof of the green-
house, my Dear,
I should have understood their burning.

IN EXCELSIS

You–you–
Your shadow is sunlight on a plate of silver;
Your footsteps, the seeding-place of lilies;
Your hands moving, a chime of bells across a wind-
less air.

The movement of your hands is the long, golden running of light from a rising sun; It is the hopping of birds upon a garden-path.

As the perfume of jonquils, you come forth in the morning. Young horses are not more sudden than your thoughts,

Your words are bees about a pear-tree,
Your fancies are the gold-and-black striped wasps buzzing among red apples. I drink your lips, I eat the whiteness of your hands and feet.
My mouth is open,
As a new jar I am empty and open.
Like white water are you who fill the cup of my mouth,
Like a brook of water thronged with lilies.
You are frozen as the clouds,
You are far and sweet as the high clouds.
I dare reach to you, I dare touch the rim of your brightness.
I leap beyond the winds, I cry and shout,
For my throat is keen as a sword
Sharpened on a hone of ivory.
My throat sings the joy of my eyes,
The rushing gladness of my love.
How has the rainbow fallen upon my heart?
How have I snared the seas to lie in my fingers
And caught the sky to be a cover for my head?
How have you come to dwell with me,
Compassing me with the four circles of your mystic lightness,
So that I say " Glory! Glory!" and bow before you As to a shrine?
Do I tease myself that morning is morning and a day after?

Do I think the air a condescension,
The earth a politeness,
Heaven a boon deserving thanks?
So you–air–earth–heaven–
I do not thank you,
I take you,
I live.
And those things which I say in consequence
Are rubies mortised in a gate of stone.

LA RONDE DU DIABLE

" Here we go round the ivy-bush,"
And thats a tune we all dance to.
Little poet people snatching ivy,
Trying to prevent one another from snatching ivy.
If you get a leaf, theres another for me;
Look at the bush.
But I want your leaf, Brother, and you mine,
Therefore, of course, we push.
"Here we go round the laurel-tree."
Do we want laurels for ourselves most,
Or most that no one else shall have any?
We cannot stop to discuss the question.
We cannot stop to plait them into crowns
Or notice whether they become us.
We scarcely see the laurel-tree,
The crowd about us is all we see,
And theres no room in it for you and me.
Therefore, Sisters, its my belief
Weve none of us very much chance at a leaf.
"Here we go round the barberry-bush."
Its a bitter, blood-red fruit at best,
Which puckers the mouth and burns the heart.
To tell the truth, only one or two
Want the berries enough to strive
For more than he has, more than she.
An acid berry for you and me.
Abundance of berries for all who will eat,
But an aching meat.
Thats poetry.
And who wants to swallow a mouthful of sorrow?
The world is old and our century
Must be well along, and weve no time to waste.
Make haste, Brothers and Sisters, push
With might and main round the ivy-bush,
Struggle and pull at the laurel-tree,

And leave the barberries be
For poor lost lunatics like me,
Who set them so high
They overtop the sun in the sky.
Does it matter at all that we dont know why?
ROBERT FROST
FIRE AND ICE
Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what Ive tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To know that for destruction ice Is also great,
And would suffice.
THE GRINDSTONE
Having a wheel and four legs of its own
Has never availed the cumbersome grindstone
To get it anywhere that I can see.
These hands have helped it go and even race;
Not all the motion, though, they ever lent,
Not all the miles it may have thought it went,
Have got it one step from the starting place.
It stands beside the same old apple tree.
The shadow of the apple tree is thin
Upon it now; its feet are fast in snow.
All other farm machinerys gone in,
And some of it on no more legs and wheel
Than the grindstone can boast to stand or go.
(Im thinking chiefly of the wheelbarrow.)
For months it hasnt known the taste of steel,
Washed down with rusty water in a tin.
But standing outdoors, hungry, in the cold,
Except in towns, at night, is not a sin.
And, anyway, its standing in the yard
Under a ruinous live apple tree
Has nothing any more to do with me,
Except that I remember how of old,
One summer day, all day I drove it hard,
And some one mounted on it rode it hard,
And he and I between us ground a blade.
I gave it the preliminary spin,
And poured on water (tears it might have been);
And when it almost gayly jumped and flowed,
A Father-Time-like man got on and rode,

Armed with a scythe and spectacles that glowed.
He turned on will-power to increase the load
And slow me down–and I abruptly slowed,
Like coming to a sudden railroad station.
I changed from hand to hand in desperation.
I wondered what machine of ages gone
This represented an improvement on.
For all I knew it may have sharpened spears
And arrowheads itself. Much use for years
Had gradually worn it an oblate
Spheroid that kicked and struggled in its gait,
Appearing to return me hate for hate.
(But I forgive it now as easily
As any other boyhood enemy
Whose pride has failed to get him anywhere.) I wondered who it was the man thought ground–
The one who held the wheel back or the one
Who gave his life to keep it going round?
I wondered if he really thought it fair
For him to have the say when we were done.
Such were the bitter thoughts to which I turned.
Not for myself was I so much concerned.
Oh, no!–although, of course, I could have found
A better way to pass the afternoon
Than grinding discord out of a grindstone,
And beating insects at their gritty tune.
Nor was I for the man so much concerned.
Once when the grindstone almost jumped its bearing It looked as if he might be badly thrown
And wounded on his blade. So far from caring, I laughed inside, and only cranked the faster, (It ran as if it wasnt greased but glued); I welcomed any moderate disaster
That might be calculated to postpone
What evidently nothing could conclude.
The thing that made me more and more afraid
Was that wed ground it sharp and hadnt known,
And now were only wasting precious blade.
And when he raised it dripping once and tried
The creepy edge of it with wary touch,
And viewed it over his glasses funny-eyed,
Only disinterestedly to decide
It needed a turn more, I could have cried
Wasnt there danger of a turn too much?
Mightnt we make it worse instead of better?
I was for leaving something to the whetter.

What if it wasnt all it should be? Id
Be satisfied if hed be satisfied.
THE WITCH OF COOS
Circa 1922 I Staid the night for shelter at a farm
Behind the mountain, with a mother and son,
Two old-believers. They did all the talking.
The Mother
Folks think a witch who has familiar spirits
She could call up to pass a winter evening,
But wont, should be burned at the stake or something.
Summoning spirits isnt " Button, button, Whos got the button? " Id have you understand.
The Son
Mother can make a common table rear
And kick with two legs like an army mule.
The Mother
And when Ive done it, what good have I done?
Rather than tip a table for you, let me
Tell you what Ralle the Sioux Control once told me.
He said the dead had souls, but when I asked him How that could be–I thought the dead were souls,
He broke my trance. Dont that make you suspicious That theres something the dead are keeping back? Yes, theres something the dead are keeping back. The Son
You wouldnt want to tell him what we have
Up attic, mother?
The Mother
Bones–a skeleton.
The Son
But the headboard of mothers bed is pushed
Against the attic door: the door is nailed.
Its harmless. Mother hears it in the night
Halting perplexed behind the barrier
Of door and headboard. Where it wants to get
Is back into the cellar where it came from.
The Mother
Well never let them, will we, son? Well never!
The Son It left the cellar forty years ago
And carried itself like a pile of dishes
Up one flight from the cellar to the kitchen,
Another from the kitchen to the bedroom,
Another from the bedroom to the attic,
Right past both father and mother, and neither stopped it.
Father had gone upstairs; mother was downstairs.
I was a baby: I dont know where I was.
The Mother

The only fault my husband found with me–
I went to sleep before I went to bed,
Especially in winter when the bed
Might just as well be ice and the clothes snow.
The night the bones came up the cellar-stairs
Toffile had gone to bed alone and left me,
But left an open door to cool the room off
So as to sort of turn me out of it.
I was just coming to myself enough
To wonder where the cold was coming from,
When I heard Toffile upstairs in the bedroom
And thought I heard him downstairs in the cellar.
The board we had laid down to walk dry-shod on
When there was water in the cellar in spring
Struck the hard cellar bottom. And then some one
Began the stairs, two footsteps for each step,
The way a man with one leg and a crutch,
Or little child, comes up. It wasnt Toffile:
It wasnt any one who could be there.
The bulkhead double-doors were double-locked
And swollen tight and buried under snow.
The cellar windows were banked up with sawdust
And swollen tight and buried under snow.
It was the bones. I knew them–and good reason.
My first impulse was to get to the knob
And hold the door. But the bones didnt try
The door; they halted helpless on the landing,
Waiting for things to happen in their favor.
The faintest restless rustling ran all through them.
I never could have done the thing I did
If the wish hadnt been too strong in me
To see how they were mounted for this walk.
I had a vision of them put together
Not like a man, but like a chandelier.
So suddenly I flung the door wide on him.
A moment he stood balancing with emotion,
And all but lost himself. (A tongue of fire
Flashed out and licked along his upper teeth.
Smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes.)
Then he came at me with one hand outstretched,
The way he did in life once; but this time
I struck the hand off brittle on the floor,
And fell back from him on the floor myself.
The finger-pieces slid in all directions.
(Where did I see one of those pieces lately?

Hand me my button-box–it must be there.) I sat up on the floor and shouted, "Toffile,
Its coming up to you." It had its choice
Of the door to the cellar or the hall.
It took the hall door for the novelty,
And set off briskly for so slow a thing,
Still going every which way in the joints, though,
So that it looked like lightning or a scribble,
From the slap I had just now given its hand.
I listened till it almost climbed the stairs
From the hall to the only finished bedroom,
Before I got up to do anything;
Then ran and shouted, "Shut the bedroom door,
Toffile, for my sake! " "Company," he said,
"Dont make me get up; Im too warm in bed."
So lying forward weakly on the handrail
I pushed myself upstairs, and in the light
(The kitchen had been dark) I had to own
I could see nothing. " Toffile, I dont see it.
Its with us in the room, though. Its the bones." " What bones? " " The cellar bones–out of the grave."
That made him throw his bare legs out of bed
And sit up by me and take hold of me.
I wanted to put out the light and see If I could see it, or else mow the room,
With our arms at the level of our knees,
And bring the chalk-pile down. " Ill tell you what– Its looking for another door to try.
The uncommonly deep snow has made him think
Of his old song, The Wild Colonial Boy,
He always used to sing along the tote-road.
Hes after an open door to get out-doors.
Lets trap him with an open door up attic."
Toffile agreed to that, and sure enough,
Almost the moment he was given an opening,
The steps began to climb the attic stairs.
I heard them. Toffile didnt seem to hear them.
"Quick!" I slammed to the door and held the knob. " Toffile, get nails." I made him nail the door shut, And push the headboard of the bed against it.
Then we asked was there anything
Up attic that wed ever want again.
The attic was less to us than the cellar.
If the bones liked the attic, let them like it,
Let them stay in the attic. When they sometimes
Come down the stairs at night and stand perplexed
Behind the door and headboard of the bed, Brushing their chalky skull with chalky fingers,

With sounds like the dry rattling of a shutter,
Thats what I sit up in the dark to say–
To no one any more since Toffile died.
Let them stay in the attic since they went there.
I promised Toffile to be cruel to them
For helping them be cruel once to him.
The Son
We think they had a grave down in the cellar.
The Mother
We know they had a grave down in the cellar.
The Son
We never could find out whose bones they were.
The Mother
Yes, we could too, son. Tell the truth for once.
They were a mans his father killed for me.
I mean a man he killed instead of me.
The least I could do was to help dig their grave.
We were about it one night in the cellar.
Son knows the story: but twas not for him
To tell the truth, suppose the time had come.
Son looks surprised to see me end a lie
Wed kept up all these years between ourselves
So as to have it ready for outsiders.
But to-night I dont care enough to lie– I dont remember why I ever cared.
Toffile, if he were here, I dont believe Could tell you why he ever cared himself.
She hadnt found the finger-bone she wanted Among the buttons poured out in her lap.
I verified the name next morning: Toffile; The rural letter-box said Toffile Lajway.

A BROOK IN THE CITY

The farm house lingers, though averse to square
With the new city street it has to wear
A number in. But what about the brook
That held the house as in an elbow-crook?
I ask as one who knew the brook, its strength
And impulse, having dipped a finger-length
And made it leap my knuckle, having tossed
A flower to try its currents where they crossed.
The meadow grass could be cemented down
From growing under pavements of a town;
The apple trees be sent to hearth-stone flame.
Is water wood to serve a brook the same?
How else dispose of an immortal force
No longer needed? Staunch it at its source
With cinder loads dumped down? The brook was thrown

Deep in a sewer dungeon under stone
In fetid darkness still to live and run–
And all for nothing it had ever done
Except forget to go in fear perhaps.
No one would know except for ancient maps
That such a brook ran water. But I wonder
If, from its being kept forever under,
These thoughts may not have risen that so keep
This new-built city from both work and sleep.

DESIGN I Found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth–
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches broth–
A snow-drop spider, a flower like froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?.
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night? j
What but design of darkness to appal?– If design govern in a thing so small.

CARL SANDBURG

AND SO TO-DAY

And so to-day–they lay him away–
the boy nobody knows the name of–
the buck private–the unknown soldier–
the doughboy who dug under and died
when they told him to–thats him.

Down Pennsylvania Avenue to-day the riders go, men and boys riding horses, roses in their teeth, stems of roses, rose leaf stalks, rose dark leaves–the line of the green ends in a red rose flash.

Skeleton men and boys riding skeleton horses, the rib bones shine, the rib bones curve, shine with savage, elegant curves–a jawbone runs with a long white slant, a skull dome runs with a long white arch, bone triangles click and rattle, elbows, ankles, white line slants–shining in the sun, past the White House, past the Treasury Building, Army and Navy Buildings, on to the mystic white Capitol Dome–so they go down Pennsylvania Avenue to-day, skeleton men and boys riding skeleton horses, stems of roses in their teeth, rose dark leaves at their white jaw slants–and a horse laugh question nickers and whinnies, moans with a whistle out of horse head teeth: why? who? where?

(" The big fish–eat the little fish–
the little fish–eat the shrimps–
and the shrimps–eat mud,"–
said a cadaverous man–with a black umbrella–

spotted with white polka dots–with a missing
ear–with a missing foot and arms–
with a missing sheath of muscles
singing to the silver sashes of the sun.)

And so to-day–they lay him away–
the boy nobody knows the name of–
the buck private–the unknown soldier–
the doughboy who dug under and died
when they told him to–thats him.

If he picked himself and said, "I am ready to die,"
if he gave his name and said, "My country, take me,"
then the baskets of roses to-day are for the Boy,
the flowers, the songs, the steamboat whistles,
the proclamations of the honorable orators,
they are all for the Boy–thats him.

If the government of the Republic picked him saying, "You are wanted, your country takes you "–if the Republic put a stethoscope to his heart and looked at his teeth and tested his eyes and said, "You are a citizen of the Republic and a sound animal in all parts and functions–the Republic takes you "–then to-day the baskets of flowers are all for the

Republic, the roses, the songs, the steamboat whistles, the proclamations of the honorable orators–they are all for the Republic.

And so to-day–they lay him away–and an understanding goes–his long sleep shall be under arms and arches near the Capitol Dome–there is an authorization–he shall have tomb companions– the martyred presidents of the Republic–the buck private–the unknown soldier–thats him.

The man who was war commander of the armies of the Republic rides down Pennsylvania Avenue–The man who is peace commander of the armies of the Republic rides down Pennsylvania Avenue–for the sake of the Boy, for the sake of the Republic.

(And the hoofs of the skeleton horses all drum soft on the asphalt footing–so soft is the drumming, so soft the roll call of the grinning sergeants calling the roll call–so soft is it all–a camera man murmurs, "Moonshine.")

Look–who salutes the coffin– lays a wreath of remembrance on the box where a buck private sleeps a clean dry sleep at last– look–it is the highest ranking general of the officers of the armies of the Republic.

(Among pigeon corners of the Congressional Library–they file documents quietly, casually, all in a days work–this human document, the buck private nobody knows the name of–they file away in granite and steel–with music and roses, salutes, proclamations of the honorable orators.)

Across the country, between two ocean shore lines, where cities cling to rail and water routes, there people and horses stop in their foot tracks, cars and wagons stop in their wheel tracks–faces at street crossings shine with a silence of eggs laid in a row on a pantry shelf–among the ways and paths of the flow of the Republic faces come to a standstill, sixty clockticks count–in the name of the Boy, in the name of the Republic.

(A million faces a thousand miles from Pennsylvania Avenue stay frozen with a look, a clocktick, a moment–skeleton riders on skeleton horses–the nickering high horse laugh, the whinny and the howl up Pennsylvania Avenue: who? why? where?) (So people far from the asphalt footing of Pennsylvania Avenue look, wonder, mumble–the riding white-jaw phantoms ride hi-eeee, hi-eeee, hi-yi, hi-yi, hi-eeee–the proclamations of the honorable orators mix with the top-sergeants whistling the roll call.) If when the clockticks counted sixty, when the heartbeats of the Republic came to a stop for a minute, if the Boy had happened to sit up, happening to sit up as Lazarus sat up, in the story, then the first shivering language to drip off his mouth might have come as, "Thank God," or " Am I dreaming?"

or " What the hell " or " When do we eat? " or "Kill em, kill em, the." or " Was that, a rat, ran over my face? " or " For Christs sake, gimme water, gimme water,"

or " Blub blub, bloo bloo"

or any bubbles of shell shock gibberish
from the gashes of No Mans Land.

Maybe some buddy knows,
some sister, mother, sweetheart,
maybe some girl who sat with him once
when a two-horn silver moon slid on the peak of a house-roof gable,
and promises lived in the air of the night,
when the air was filled with promises,
when any little slip-shoe lovey
could pick a promise out of the air.

"Feed it to em, they lap it up, bull. bull. bull," Said a movie news reel camera man, Said a Washington newspaper correspondent, Said a baggage handler lugging a trunk, Said a two-a-day vaudeville juggler, Said a hanky-pank selling jumping-jacks. " Hokum–they lap it up," said the bunch.

And a tall scar-face ball player,
Played out as a ball player,
Made a speech of his own for the hero boy,
Sent an earful of his own to the dead buck private:
"Its all safe now, buddy,
Safe when you say yes,
Safe for the yes-men."
He was a tall scar-face battler
With his face in a newspaper
Reading want ads, reading jokes,
Reading love, murder, politics,
Jumping from jokes back to the want ads,
Reading the want ads first and last,
The letters of the word JOB, "J-O-B,"
Burnt like a shot of bootleg booze
In the bones of his head–
In the wish of his scar-face eyes.

The honorable orators,
Always the honorable orators,
Buttoning the buttons on their prinz alberts,
Pronouncing the syllables " sac-ri-fice,"
Juggling those bitter salt-soaked syllables–
Do they ever gag with hot ashes in their mouths?
Do their tongues ever shrivel with a pain of fire
Across those simple syllables " sac-ri-fice "?

(There was one orator people far off saw.
He had on a gunnysack shirt over his bones,
And he lifted an elbow socket over his head,
And he lifted a skinny signal finger.
And he had nothing to say, nothing easy–
He mentioned ten million men, mentioned them as having gone west, mentioned them as shoving up the daisies. We could write it all on a postage stamp, what he said.
He said it and quit and faded away,
A gunnysack shirt on his bones.)

Stars of the night sky, did you see that phantom fadeout, did you see those phantom riders, skeleton riders on skeleton horses, stems of roses in their teeth, rose leaves red on white-jaw slants, grinning along on Pennsylvania Avenue, the top-sergeants calling roll calls– did their horses nicker a horse laugh?

did the ghosts of the boney battalions move out and on, up the Potomac, over on the
Ohio and out to the Mississippi, the Missouri, the
Red River, and down to the Rio Grande, and on to the
Yazoo, over to the Chattahoochee and up to the Rappa- hannock? did you see em, stars of the night sky?

And so to-day–they lay him away–the boy nobody knows the name of–they lay him away in granite and steel–with music and roses–under a flag–under a sky of promises.

CALIFORNIA CITY LANDSCAPE

On a mountain-side the real estate agents
Put up signs marking the city lots to be sold there.
A man whose father and mother were Irish
Ran a goat farm half-way down the mountain;
He drove a covered wagon years ago,
Understood how to handle a rifle,
Shot grouse, buffalo, Indians, in a single year,
And now was raising goats around a shanty.
Down at the foot of the mountain
Two Japanese families had flower farms.
A man and woman were in rows of sweet peas
Picking the pink and white flowers
To put in baskets and take to the Los Angeles market.
They were clean as what they handled
There in the morning sun, the big people and the baby-faces.

Across the road, high on another mountain,
Stood a house saying, "I am it," a commanding house.
There was the home of a motion picture director
Famous for lavish whore-house interiors,
Clothes ransacked from the latest designs for women
In the combats of " male against female."
The mountain, the scenery, the layout of the land-
scape,
And the peace of the morning sun as it happened,
The miles of houses pocketed in the valley beyond–It was all worth looking at, worth wondering about, How long it might last, how young it might be.

UPSTREAM

The strong men keep coming on.
They go down shot, hanged, sick, broken.
They live on, fighting, singing,
lucky as plungers.
The strong men. they keep coming on.
The strong mothers pulling them from a dark sea, a great prairie, a long mountain.
Call hallelujah, call amen, call deep thanks. The strong men keep coming on.

WINDFLOWER LEAF

This flower is repeated out of old winds, out of old times.
The wind repeats these, it must have these, over and over again.
Oh, windflowers so fresh, Oh, beautiful leaves, here now again.
The domes over fall to pieces.
The stones under fall to pieces.
Rain and ice wreck the works. The wind keeps, the windflowers keep, the leaves last, The wind young and strong lets these last longer than stones.

VACHEL LINDSAY

IN PRAISE OF JOHNNY APPLESEED1 (Born 1775. Died 1847)

I. Over The Appalachian Barricade In the days of President Washington, T
The glory of the nations, l e
Dust and ashes, /. f Time- o j i i Sifting soft
Snow and sleet,-
And hay and oats and wheat, sentence and ni A. rhyme.
Blew west,
Crossed the Appalachians,
Found the glades of rotting leaves, the soft deer- pastures,
The farms of the far-off future
In the forest.
Colts jumped the fence,
Snorting, ramping, snapping, sniffing,
With gastronomic calculations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
The east walls of our citadel,
And turned to gold-horned unicorns,

Feasting in the dim, volunteer farms of the forest.
Stripedest, kickingest kittens escaped,
Caterwauling " Yankee Doodle Dandy,"

1 The best account of John Chapmans career, under the name "Johnny Appleseed," is to be found in Harpers Monthly Magazine, November, 1871.

Renounced their poor relations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
And turned to tiny tigers In the humorous forest.
Chickens escaped
From farmyard congregations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
And turned to amber trumpets
On the ramparts of our Hoosiers nest and citadel,
Millennial heralds
Of the foggy mazy forest.
Pigs broke loose, scrambled west,
Scorned their loathsome stations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
Turned to roaming, foaming wild boars
Of the forest.
The smallest, blindest puppies toddled west
While their eyes were coming open,
And, with misty observations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
Barked, barked, barked
At the glow-worms and the marsh lights and the lightning-bugs,
And turned to ravening wolves
Of the forest.
Crazy parrots and canaries flew west,
Drunk on May-time revelations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
And turned to delirious, flower-dressed fairies
Of the lazy forest.
Haughtiest swans and peacocks swept west,
And, despite soft derivations,
Crossed the Appalachians,
And turned to blazing warrior souls
Of the forest,
Singing the ways
Of the Ancient of Days.
And the " Old Continentals In their ragged regimentals,"
With bards imaginations,
Crossed the Appalachians.
And
A boy

Blew west
And with prayers and incantations,
And with " Yankee Doodle Dandy,"
Crossed the Appalachians,
And was " young John Chapman,"
Then
"Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Appleseed,"
Chief of the fastnesses, dappled and vast, In a pack on his back, In a deer-hide sack,
The beautiful orchards of the past,
The ghosts of all the forests and the groves– In that pack on his back, In that talisman sack,
To-morrows peaches, pears and cherries,
To-morrows grapes and red raspberries.
Seeds and tree souls, precious things,
Feathered with microscopic wings,
All the outdoors the child heart knows,
And the apple, green, red, and white,
Sun of his day and his night–
The apple allied to the thorn,
Child of the rose.
Porches untrod of forest houses
All before him, all day long,
"Yankee Doodle " his marching song;
And the evening breeze
Joined his psalms of praise
As he sang the ways
Of the Ancient of Days.
Leaving behind august Virginia,
Proud Massachusetts, and proud Maine,
Planting the trees that would march and train
On, in his name to the great Pacific,
Like Birnam wood to Dunsinane,
Johnny Appleseed swept on,
Every shackle gone,
Loving every sloshy brake,
Loving every skunk and snake,
Loving every leathery weed,
Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Appleseed,
Master and ruler of the unicorn-ramping forest,
The tiger-mewing forest,
The rooster-trumpeting, boar-foaming, wolf-ravening forest,
The spirit-haunted, fairy-enchanted forest, Stupendous and endless,
Searching its perilous ways In the name of the Ancient of Days.
II. The Indians Worship Him, But He
Hurries On

Painted kings in the midst of the clearing
Heard him asking his friends the eagles
To guard each planted seed and seedling.
Then he was a god, to the red mans dreaming;
Then the chiefs brought treasures grotesque and fair,–
Magical trinkets and pipes and guns,
Beads and furs from their medicine-lair,–
Stuck holy feathers in his hair,
Hailed him with austere delight.
The orchard god was their guest through the night.
While the late snow blew from bleak Lake Erie,
Scourging rock and river and reed,
All night long they made great medicine
For Jonathan Chapman,
Johnny Appleseed,
Johnny Appleseed;
And as though his heart were a wind-blown wheat-sheaf,
As though his heart were a new-built nest,
As though their heaven house were his breast,
In swept the snow-birds singing glory.
And I hear his bird heart beat its story,
Hear yet how the ghost of the forest shivers,
Hear yet the cry of the gray, old orchards,
Dim and decaying by the rivers,
And the timid wings of the bird-ghosts beating,
And the ghosts of the tom-toms beating, beating.
But he left their wigwams and their love. While you
By the hour of dawn he was proud and
Stark, beats of deer ,,.,, T,.,,.,., i the snow.
Kissed the Indian babes with a sigh, nj see. f,y
Went forth to live on roots and bark, their track,
Sleep in the trees, while the years howled footprints by–we know.
Calling the catamounts by name,
And buffalo bulls no hand could tame,
Slaying never a living creature,
Joining the birds in every game,
With the gorgeous turkey gobblers mocking,
With the lean-necked eagles boxing and shouting;
Sticking their feathers in his hair,–
Turkey feathers,
Eagle feathers,–
Trading hearts with all beasts and weathers
He swept on, winged and wonder-crested,
Bare-armed, barefooted, and bare-breasted.
The maples, shedding their spinning While you , read, see

Seeds, conventions
Called to his appleseeds in the ground, f deer 90 Vast chestnut-trees, with their butterfly The bucks nations, toss their
Called to his seeds without a sound. fussy fawns
And the chipmunk turned a " summer-fly-
set,"
And the foxes danced the Virginia reel;
Hawthorne and crab-thorn bent, rain-wet,
And dropped their flowers in his night-black hair;
And the soft fawns stopped for his perorations;
And his black eyes shone through the forest-gleam,
And he plunged young hands into new-turned earth,
And prayed dear orchard boughs into birth;
And he ran with the rabbit and slept with the stream.
And he ran with the rabbit and slept with the stream.
And so for us he made great medicine,
And so for us he made great medicine,
In the days of President Washington.
III. Johnny Appleseeds Old Age
Long, long after,
When settlers put up beam and rafter,
They asked of the birds: " Who gave this fruit?
Who watched this fence till the seeds took root?
Who gave these boughs? " They asked the sky,
And there was no reply. To be read
But the robin might have said, hoof-beat "To the farthest West he has followed f fawns ., long gone the SUn, From re-
His life and his empire just begun." spectable
J pasture, and park and lawn,
Self-scourged, like a monk, with a And heart- throne for wages, f tnsf that
Stripped like the iron-souled Hindu sages, ore coming
Draped like a statue, in strings like a H hen the
Scarecrow, forest, once
Tt-i-i i v. u A-more, ts the
His helmet-hat an old tin pan, master of
But worn in the love of the heart of man, men-
More sane than the helm of Tamerlane,
Hairy Ainu, wild man of Borneo, Robinson Crusoe –Johnny Appleseed;
And the robin might have said,
"Sowing, he goes to the far, new West,
With the apple, the sun of his burning breast–
The apple allied to the thorn,
Child of the rose."
Washington buried in Virginia,
Jackson buried in Tennessee,

Young Lincoln, brooding in Illinois,
And Johnny Appleseed, priestly and free,
Knotted and gnarled, past seventy years,
Still planted on in the woods alone.
Ohio and young Indiana–
These were his wide altar-stone,
Where still he burnt out flesh and bone.

Twenty days ahead of the Indian, twenty years ahead of the white man, At last the Indian overtook him, at last the Indian hurried past him: At last the white man overtook him, at last the white man hurried past him; At last his own trees overtook him, at last his own trees hurried past him.

Many cats were tame again,
Many ponies tame again,
Many pigs were tame again,
Many canaries tame again;
And the real frontier was his sun-burnt breast.

From the fiery core of that apple, the earth,
Sprang apple-amaranths divine.
Loves orchards climbed to the heavens of the West,
And snowed the earthly sod with flowers.
Farm hands from the terraces of the blest
Danced on the mists with their ladies fine;
And Johnny Appleseed laughed with his dreams,
And swam once more the ice-cold streams.
And the doves of the spirit swept through the hours,
With doom-calls, love-calls, death-calls, dream-calls;
And Johnny Appleseed, all that year,
Lifted his hands to the farm-filled sky,
To the apple-harvesters busy on high;
And so once more his youth began,
And so for us he made great medicine–
Johnny Appleseed, medicine-man.
Then
The sun was his turned-up broken barrel,
Out of which his juicy apples rolled,
Down the repeated terraces,
Thumping across the gold,
An angel in each apple that touched the forest mold,
A ballot-box in each apple,
A state capital in each apple,
Great high schools, great colleges,
All America in each apple,
Each red, rich, round, and bouncing moon
That touched the forest mold.
Like scrolls and rolled-up flags of silk,

He saw the fruits unfold,

And all our expectations in one wild-flower-written dream, Confusion and death sweetness, and a thicket of crab-thorns, Heart of a hundred midnights, heart of the merciful morns.

Heavens boughs bent down with their alchemy,
Perfumed airs, and thoughts of wonder.
And the dew on the grass and his own cold tears
Were one in brooding mystery,
Though deaths loud thunder came upon him,
Though deaths loud thunder struck him down–
The boughs and the proud thoughts swept through the thunder,

Till he saw our wide nation, each State a flower, Each petal a park for holy feet,

With wild fawns merry on every street,
With wild fawns merry on every street,
The vista of ten thousand years, flower-lighted and
complete.

Hear the lazy weeds murmuring, bays and rivers whispering,

From Michigan to Texas, California to Maine;
Listen to the eagles, screaming, calling,
"Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Appleseed,"
There by the doors of old Fort Wayne.

In the four-poster bed Johnny Appleseed built,
Autumn rains were the curtains, autumn leaves were the quilt. He laid him down sweetly, and slept through the night,

Like a bump on a log, like a stone washed white,
There by the doors of old Fort Wayne.

I KNOW ALL THIS WHEN GIPSY
FIDDLES CRY

Oh, gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Saying: " We tell the fortunes of the nations,
And revel in the deep palm of the world.
The head-line is the road we choose for trade.
The love-line is the lane wherein we camp.
The life-line is the road we wander on.
Mount Venus, Jupiter, and all the rest
Are finger-tips of ranges clasping round
And holding up the Romanys wide sky."

Oh, gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Saying: " We will swap horses till the doom,
And mend the pots and kettles of mankind,
And lend our sons to big-time vaudeville,
Or to the race-track, or the learned world.
But Indias Brahma waits within their breasts.
They will return to us with gipsy grins,
And chatter Romany, and shake their curls

And hug the dirtiest babies in the camp.
They will return to the moving pillar of smoke,
The whitest toothed, the merriest laughers known,
The blackest haired of all the tribes of men.
What trap can hold such cats? The Romany
Has crossed such delicate palms with lead or gold,
Wheedling in sun and rain, through perilous years,
All coins now look alike. The palm is all.
Our greasy pack of cards is still the book
Most read of men. The hearts librarians,
We tell all lovers what they want to know.
So, out of the famed Chicago Library,
Out of the great Chicago orchestras,
Out of the skyscraper, the Fine Arts Building,
Our sons will come with fiddles and with loot,
Dressed, as of old, like turkey-cocks and zebras,
Like tiger-lilies and chameleons,
Go west with us to California,
Telling the fortunes of the bleeding world,
And kiss the sunset, ere their day is done."
Oh, gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Picking the brains and pockets of mankind,
You will go westward for one-half hour yet.
You will turn eastward in a little while.
You will go back, as men turn to Kentucky,
Land of their fathers, dark and bloody ground.
When all the Jews go home to Syria,
When Chinese cooks go back to Canton, China,
When Japanese photographers return
With their black cameras to Tokio,
And Irish patriots to Donegal,
And Scotch accountants back to Edinburgh,
You will go back to India, whence you came.
When you have reached the borders of your quest,
Homesick at last, by many a devious way,
Winding the wonderlands circuitous,
By foot and horse will trace the long way back!
Fiddling for ocean liners, while the dance
Sweeps through the decks, your brown tribes all will go!
Those east-bound ships will hear your long farewell
On fiddle, piccolo, and flute and timbrel.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.
That hour of their homesickness, I myself
Will turn, will say farewell to Illinois,
To old Kentucky and Virginia,

And go with them to India, whence they came.
For they have heard a singing from the Ganges,
And cries of orioles,–from the temple caves,–
And Bengals oldest, humblest villages.
They smell the supper smokes of Amritsar.
Green monkeys cry in Sanskrit to their souls
From lofty bamboo trees of hot Madras.
They think of towns to ease their feverish eyes,
And make them stand and meditate forever,
Domes of astonishment, to heal the mind.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.
What music will be blended with the wind
When gipsy fiddlers, nearing that old land,
Bring tunes from all the world to Brahmas house?
Passing the Indus, winding poisonous forests,
Blowing soft flutes at scandalous temple girls,
Filling the highways with their magpie loot,
What brass from my Chicago will they heap,
What gems from Walla Walla, Omaha,
Will they pile near the Bodhi Tree, and laugh?
They will dance near such temples as best suit them,
Though they will not quite enter, or adore,
Looking on roofs, as poets look on lilies,
Looking at towers, as boys at forest vines,
That leap to tree-tops through the dizzy air.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.
And with the gipsies there will be a king
And a thousand desperadoes just his style,
With all their rags dyed in the blood of roses,
Splashed with the blood of angels, and of demons.
And he will boss them with an awful voice.
And with a red whip he will beat his wife.
He will be wicked on that sacred shore,
And rattle cruel spurs against the rocks,
And shake Calcuttas walls with circus bugles.
He will kill Brahmins there, in Kalis name,
And please the thugs, and blood-drunk of the earth.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.
Oh, sweating thieves, and hard-boiled scalawags,
That still will boast your pride until the doom,
Smashing every caste rule of the world,
Reaching at last your Hindu goal to smash
The caste rules of old India, and shout:
"Down with the Brahmins, let the Romany reign."

When gipsy girls look deep within my hand
They always speak so tenderly and say
That I am one of those star-crossed to wed
A princess in a forest fairy-tale.
So there will be a tender gipsy princess,
My Juliet, shining through this clan.
And I would sing you of her beauty now.
And I will fight with knives the gipsy man
Who tries to steal her wild young heart away.
And I will kiss her in the waterfalls,
And at the rainbows end, and in the incense
That curls about the feet of sleeping gods,
And sing with her in canebrakes and in rice fields, In Romany, eternal Romany.
We will sow secret herbs, and plant old roses,
And fumble through dark, snaky palaces,
Stable our ponies in the Taj Mahal,
And sleep out-doors ourselves.
In her strange fairy mill-wheel eyes will wait
All windings and unwindings of the highways,
From India, across America,–
All windings and unwindings of my fancy,
All windings and unwindings of all souls,
All windings and unwindings of the heavens.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.
We gipsies, proud and stiff-necked and perverse,
Standing upon the white Himalayas,
Will think of far divine Yosemite.
We will heal Hindu hermits there with oil
Brought from Californias tall sequoias.
And we will be like gods that heap the thunders.
And start young redwood trees on Times own mountains.
We will swap horses with the rising moon,
And mend that funny skillet called Orion,
Color the stars like San Franciscos street-lights,
And paint our sign and signature on high
In planets like a bed of crimson pansies;
While a million fiddles shake all listening hearts,
Crying good fortune to the Universe,
Whispering adventure to the Ganges waves,
And to the spirits, and all winds and gods.
Till mighty Brahma puts his golden palm
Within the gipsy kings great striped tent,
And asks his fortune told by that great love-line
That winds across his palm in splendid flame.
Only the hearthstone of old India

Will end the endless march of gipsy feet.
I will go back to India with them
When they go back to India whence they came.
I know all this, when gipsy fiddles cry.
JAMES OPPENHEIM

HEBREWS I Come of a mighty race. I come of a very mighty race. Adam was a mighty man, and Noah a captain of the moving waters, Moses was a stern and splendid king, yea, so was

Moses. Give me more songs like Davids to shake my throat to the pit of the belly, And let me roll in the Isaiah thunder.

Ho! the mightiest of our young men was born under a star in the midwinter. His name is written on the sun and it is frosted on the moon. Earth breathes him like an eternal spring: he is a second sky over the Earth.

Mighty race! mighty race!–my flesh, my flesh Is a cup of song, Is a well in Asia.

I go about with a dark heart where the Ages sit in a divine thunder. My blood is cymbal-clashed and the anklets of the dancers tinkle there. Harp and psaltery, harp and psaltery make drunk my spirit.

I am of the terrible people, I am of the strange

Hebrews. Amongst the swarms fixed like the rooted stars, my folk is a streaming Comet, Comet of the Asian tiger-darkness, The Wanderer of Eternity, the eternal Wandering

Jew.

Ho! we have turned against the mightiest of our young men

And in that denial we have taken on the Christ,
And the two thieves beside the Christ,
And the Magdalen at the feet of the Christ,
And the Judas with thirty silver pieces selling the

Christ–
And our twenty centuries in Europe have the shape oi a Cross On which we have hung in disaster and glory.

Mighty race! mighty race!–my flesh, my flesh
Is a cup of song,
Is a well in Asia.
ALFRED KREYMBORG

ADAGIO: A DUET
(For J. S. and L. U.)

Should you lay ear to these lines– you will not catch a distant drum of hoofs, cavalcade of Arabians, passionate horde bearing down, destroying your citadel– but maybe youll hear– should you just listen at the right place, hold it tenaciously, give your full blood to the effort- maybe youll note the start of a single step, always persistently faint, wavering in its movement between coming and going, never quite arriving, never quite passing– and tell me which it is, you or I that you greet, searching a mutual being– and whether two arent closer for the labor of an ear?
DIE RUCHE

She lets the hydrant water run: He fancies lonely, banal, bald-headed mountains, affected by the daily caress of the tropical sun, weeping tears the length of brooks down their faces and flanks. She lets the hydrant water run: He hearkens Father Sebastian cooking and spreading homely themes over an inept-looking clavier confounding the wits of his children and all mens children down to the last generation. He marvels at the paradox, drums his head with the tattoo: how can a thing as small as he shape and maintain an art out of himself universal enough to carry her daily vigil to crystalled immortality? She lets the hydrant water run.

RAIN Its all very well for you suddenly to withdraw and say, Ill come again, but what of the bruises youve left, what of the green and the blue, the yellow, purple and violet?–dont you be telling us, Im innocent of these, irresponsible of happenings–didnt we see you steal next to her, tenderly, with your silver mist about you to hide your blandishment?–now, what of what followed, eh?–we saw you hover close, caress her, open her pore-cups, make a cross of her, quickly penetrate her–she opening to you, engulfing you, every limb of her, bud of her, pore of her?–dont call these things, kisses– mouth-kisses, hand-kisses, elbow, knee and toe, and let it go at that– disappear and promise
what youll never perform: weve known you to slink away until drought-time, drooping-time, withering-time: weve caught you crawling off
into winter-time,
try to cover what youve done
with a long white scarf– your own frozen tears
(likely phrase!)
and lilt your,
Ill be back in spring!

Next spring, and you know it,
she wont be the same,
though she may look the same
to you from where you are,
and invite you down again!

PEASANT Its the mixture of peasantry makes him so slow. He waggles his head before he speaks, like a cow before she crops. He bends to the habit of dragging his feet up under him, like a measuring-worm: some of his forefathers, stooped over books, ruled short straight lines under two rows of figures to keep their thin savings from sifting to the floor. Should you strike him with a question, he will blink twice or thrice and roll his head about, like an owl in the pin-pricks of a dawn he cannot see. There is mighty little flesh about his bones, there is no gusto in his stride: he seems to wait for the blow on the buttocks that will drive him another step forward– step forward to what? There is no land, no house, no barn, he has ever owned;
he sits uncomfortable on chairs you might invite him to: if you did, hed keep his hat in hand against the moment when some silent pause for which he hearkens with his ear to one side bids him move on– move on where? It doesnt matter. He has learned to shrug his shoulders, so hell shrug his shoulders now: caterpillars do it when theyre halted by a stick. Is there a sky overhead?– a hope worth flying to?–birds may know about it, but its birds that birds descend from.

BUBBLES

You had best be very cautious how you say, I love you.
If you accent the I,
she has an opening for,
who are you
to strut on ahead
and hint there arent others,
arent, werent and wont be?
Blurt out the love,
she has suspicion for, so?– why not hitherto?–what brings you bragging now?–and what11 it be hereafter? Defer to the you, she has certitude for, me?

thanks, lad!–but why argue about it?–or fancy Im lonesome?–do I look as though you had to? And having determined how youll say it, you had next best ascertain whom it is that you say it to.

That youre sure shes the one, that therell never be another, never was one before.

And having determined whom and having learned how, when you bring these together, inform the far of the intimate– like a bubble on a pond, emerging from below, round wonderment completed by the first sight of the sky– what good will it do, if she shouldnt, I love you?– a bubbles but a bubble once, a bubble grows to die.

DIRGE

Death alone has sympathy for weariness: understanding of the ways of mathematics: of the struggle against giving up what was given: the plus one minus one of nitrogen for oxygen: and the unequal odds, you a cell against the universe, a breath or two against all time:

Death alone takes what is left without protest, criticism or a demand for more than one can give who can give no more than was given: doesnt even ask, but accepts it as it is, witnout examination, valuation, or comparison.

COLOPHON

(For W. W.)

The Occident and the Orient, posterior and posterior, sitting tight, holding fast the culture dumped by them on to primitive America,

Atlantic to Pacific, were monumental colophons a disorderly country fellow, vulgar Long Islander.

not overfond of the stench choking native respiration, poked down off the shelf with the aid of some mere blades of grass; and deliberately climbing up, brazenly usurping one end of the new America, now waves his spears aloft and shouts down valleys, across plains, over mountains, into heights:

Come, what man of you dares climb the other?

SARA TEASDALE

WISDOM It was a night of early spring,
The winter-sleep was scarcely broken;
Around us shadows and the wind
Listened for what was never spoken.
Though half a score of years are gone,
Spring comes as sharply now as then–

But if we had it all to do
It would be done the same again.
It was a spring that never came;
But we have lived enough to know That what we never have, remains; It is the things we have that go.
PLACES
Twilight
(Tucson)
Aloof as aged kings,
Wearing like them the purple,
The mountains ring the mesa
Crowned with a dusky light;
Many a time I watched
That coming-on of darkness
Till stars burned through the heavens
Intolerably bright.
It was not long I lived there,
But I became a woman
Under those vehement stars,
For it was there I heard
For the first time my spirit
Forging an iron rule for me,
As though with slow cold hammers
Beating out word by word:
"Take love when love is given,
But never think to find it
A sure escape from sorrow
Or a complete repose;
Only yourself can heal you,
Only yourself can lead you
Up the hard road to heaven
That ends where no one knows."
Full Moon
(Santa Barbara) I Listened, there was not a sound to hear
In the great rain of moonlight pouring down,
The eucalyptus trees were carved in silver,
And a light mist of silver lulled the town.
I saw far off the gray Pacific bearing
A broad white disk of flame,
And on the garden-walk a snail beside me
Tracing in crystal the slow way he came.
III
Winter Sun
(Lenox)

There was a bush with scarlet berries,
And there were hemlocks heaped with snow,
With a sound like surf on long sea-beaches
They took the wind and let it go.
The hills were shining in their samite,
Fold after fold they flowed away;
"Let come what may," your eyes were saying, "At least we two have had to-day."

Evening
(Nahant)

There was an evening when the sky was clear, Ineffably translucent in its blue;
The tide was falling, and the sea withdrew In hushed and happy music from the sheer Shadowy granite of the cliffs; and fear
Of what life may be, and what death can do,
Fell from us like steel armor, and we knew
The beauty of the Law that holds us here.
It was as though we saw the Secret Will,
It was as though we floated and were free;
In the south-west a planet shone serenely,
And the high moon, most reticent and queenly,
Seeing the earth had darkened and grown still,
Misted with light the meadows of the sea.

WORDS FOR AN OLD AIR

Your heart is bound tightly, let
Beauty beware; It is not hers to set
Free from the snare.
Tell her a bleeding hand
Bound it and tied it;
Tell her the knot will stand
Though she deride it.
One who withheld so long
All that you yearned to take,
Has made a snare too strong
For Beautys self to break.

THOSE WHO LOVE

Those who love the most
Do not talk of their love;
Francesca, Guenevere,
Dierdre, Iseult, Heloise In the fragrant gardens of heaven
Are silent, or speak, if at all,
Of fragile, inconsequent things.
And a woman I used to know
Who loved one man from her youth,
Against the strength of the fates
Fighting in lonely pride,
Never spoke of this thing,

But hearing his name by chance,
A light would pass over her face.

TWO SONGS FOR SOLITUDE I

The Crystal Gazer I Shall gather myself into myself again, I shall take my scattered selves and make them one. I shall fuse them into a polished crystal ball
Where I can see the moon and the flashing sun.
I shall sit like a sibyl, hour after hour intent,
Watching the future come and the present go–
And the little shifting pictures of people rushing
In tiny self-importance to and fro.

The Solitary

My heart has grown rich with the passing of years. I have less need now than when I was young
To share myself with every comer,
Or shape my thoughts into words with my tongue.
It is one to me that they come or go If I have myself and the drive of my will.
And strength to climb on a summer night
And watch the stars swarm over the hill.
Let them think I love them more than I do,
Let them think I care, though I go alone, If it lifts their pride, what is it to me
Who am self-complete as a flower or a stone?

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

MONOLOG FROM A MATTRESS

Heinrich Heine tztat 56, loquitur:
Can that be you, la mouche? Wait till I lift
This palsied eye-lid and make sure. Ah, true.
Come in, dear fly, and pardon my delay
In thus existing; I can promise you
Next time you come youll find no dying poet–
Without sufficient spleen to see me through,
The joke becomes too tedious a jest.
I am afraid my mind is dull to-day;
I have that–something–heavier on my chest
And then, you see, Ive been exchanging thoughts
With Doctor Franz. He talked of Kant and Hegel
As though hed nursed them both through whooping cough
And, as he left, he let his finger shake
Too playfully, as though to say, "Now off
With that long face–youve years and years to live."
I think he thinks so. But, for Heavens sake,
Dont credit it–and never tell Mathilde.
Poor dear, she has enough to bear already.
This was a month! During my lonely weeks
One person actually climbed the stairs

To seek a cripple. It was Berlioz–
But Berlioz always was original.
Meissner was also here: he caught me unawares, Scribbling to my old mother. " What! " he cried, "Is the old lady of the Dammthor still alive? And do you write her still? " " Each month or so." " And is she not unhappy then, to find How wretched you must be? " " How can she know?
You see," I laughed, " she thinks I am as well
As when she saw me last. She is too blind
To read the papers–some one else must tell
Whats in my letters, merely signed by me.
Thus she is happy. For the rest–
That any son should be as sick as I,
No mother could believe."
Ja, so it goes.
Come here, my lotus-flower. It is best
I drop the mask to-day; the half-cracked shield
Of mockery calls for younger hands to wield.
Laugh–or Ill hug it closer to my breast.
So. I can be as mawkish as I choose
And give my thoughts an airing, let them loose
For one last rambling stroll before–Now look!
Why tears? You never heard me say " the end."
Before. before I clap them in a book
And so get rid of them once and for all.
This is their holiday–well let them run–
Some have escaped already. There goes one.
What, I have often mused, did Goethe mean?
So many years ago at Weimar, Goethe said
"Heine has all the poets gifts but love."
Good God! But that is all I ever had.
More than enough! So much of love to give
That no one gave me any in return.
And so I flashed and snapped in my own fires
Until I stood, with nothing left to burn,
A twisted trunk, in chilly isolation.
Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam–you recall?
I was that Northern tree and, in the South,
Amalia. So I turned to scornful cries,
Hot iron songs to save the rest of me;
Plunging the brand in my own misery.
Crouching behind my pointed wall of words,
Ramparts I built of moons and loreleys,
Enchanted roses, sphinxes, love-sick birds,
Giants, dead lads who left their graves to dance,
Fairies and phoenixes and friendly gods–

A curious frieze, half Renaissance, half Greek,
Behind which, in revulsion of romance,
I lay and laughed–and wept–till I was weak.
Words were my shelter, words my one escape,
Words were my weapons against everything.
Was I not once the son of Revolution?
Give me the lyre, I said, and let me sing
My song of battle: Words like flaming stars
Shot down with power to burn the palaces;
Words like bright javelins to fly with fierce
Hate of the oily Philistines and glide
Through all the seven heavens till they pierce
The pious hypocrites who dare to creep Into the Holy Places. " Then," I cried.
"I am a fire to rend and roar and leap; I am all joy and song, all sword and flame!"
Ha–you observe me passionate. I aim
To curb these wild emotions lest they soar
Or drive against my will. (So I have said
These many years–and still they are not tame.)
Scraps of a song keep rumbling in my head.
Listen–you never heard me sing before.
When a false world betrays your trust
And stamps upon your fire,
When what seemed blood is only rust,
Take up the lyre!
How quickly the heroic mood
Responds to its own ringing;
The scornful heart, the angry blood
Leap upward, singing!
Ah, that was how it used to be. But now,
Du schoner Todesengel, it is odd
How more than calm I am. Franz said it shows
Power of religion, and it does, perhaps–
Religion or morphine or poultices–God knows.
I sometimes have a sentimental lapse
And long for saviours and a physical God.
When health is all used up, when money goes,
When courage cracks and leaves a shattered will,
Then Christianity begins. For a sick Jew,
It is a very good religion. Still, I fear that I will die as I have lived,
A long-nosed heathen playing with his scars,
A pagan killed by weltschmerz. I remember,
Once when I stood with Hegel at a window, I, being full of bubbling youth and coffee,
Spoke in symbolic tropes about the stars.
Something I said about " those high

Abodes of all the blest" provoked his temper.
"Abodes? The stars?" He froze me with a sneer,
"A light eruption on the firmament." " But," cried romantic I, " is there no sphere Where virtue is rewarded when we die? " And Hegel mocked, "A very pleasant whim. So you demand a bonus since you spent One lifetime and refrained from poisoning Your testy grandmother! ". How much of him
Remains in me–even when I am caught
In dreams of death and immortality.
To be eternal–what a brilliant thought!
It must have been conceived and coddled first
By some old shopkeeper in Nuremberg,
His slippers warm, his children amply nursed,
Who, with his lighted meerschaum in his hand,
His nightcap on his head, one summer night
Sat drowsing at his door. And mused, how grand If all of this could last beyond a doubt–
This placid moon, this plump gemuthlichkeit;
Pipe, breath and summer never going out–
To vegetate through all eternity.
But no such everlastingness for me!
God, if he can, keep me from such a blight.
Death, it is but the long, cool night,
And Lifes a dull and sultry day.
It darkens; I grow sleepy; I am weary of the light.
Over my bed a strange tree gleams
And there a nightingale is loud.
She sings of love, love only.
I hear it, even in dreams.
My Mouche, the other day as I lay here,
Slightly propped up upon this mattress-grave
In which Ive been interred these few eight years,
I saw a dog, a little pampered slave,
Running about and barking. I would have given
Heaven could I have been that dog; to thrive
Like him, so senseless–and so much alive!
And once I called myself a blithe Hellene,
Who am too much in love with life to live.
(The shrug is pure Hebraic). For what Ive been,
A lenient Lord will tax me–and forgive.
Dieu me pardonnera–cest son metier.
But this is jesting. There are other scandals
You havent heard. Can it be dusk so soon?
Or is this deeper darkness.? Is that you, Mother? How did you come? Where are the candles?.

Over my bed a strange tree gleams–half filled With stars and birds whose white notes glimmer through Its seven branches now that all is stilled.
What? Friday night again and all my songs
Forgotten? Wait. I still can sing–
Shma Yisroel Adonai Elohenu,
Adonai Ec hod.

Mouche–Mathilde!.

WATERS OF BABYLON

What presses about us here in the evening

As you open a window and stare at a stone-gray sky, And the streets give back the jangle of meaningless movement That is tired of life and almost too tired to die.

Night comes on, and even the night is wounded; There, on its breast, it carries a curved, white scar. What will you find out there that is not torn and anguished?

Can God be less distressed than the least of His creatures are?

Below are the blatant lights in a huddled squalor;

Above are futile fires in freezing space. What can they give that you should look to them for compassion

Though you bare your heart and lift an imploring face?

They have seen, by countless waters and windows, The women of your race facing a stony sky;

They have heard, for thousands of years, the voices of women Asking them: "Why.?" Let the night be; it has neither knowledge nor pity.

One thing alone can hope to answer your fear; It is that which struggles and blinds us and burns between us.

Let the night be. Close the window, beloved. Come here.

THE FLAMING CIRCLE

Though for fifteen years you have chaffed me across the table,

Slept in my arms and fingered my plunging heart, I scarcely know you; we have not known each other.

For all the fierce and casual contacts, something keeps us apart.

Are you struggling, perhaps, in a world that I see only dimly, Except as it sweeps toward the star on which I stand alone? Are we swung like two planets, compelled in our separate orbits,

Yet held in a flaming circle far greater than our own?

Last night we were single, a radiant core of completion, Surrounded by flames that embraced us but left no burns, To-day we are only ourselves; we have plans and pretensions; We move in dividing streets with our small and different concerns, Merging and rending, we wait for the miracle.

Meanwhile The fire runs deeper, consuming these selves in its growth. Can this be the mystical marriage–this clash and communion;

This pain of possession that frees and encircles us both?

PORTRAIT OF A MACHINE

What nudity is beautiful as this
Obedient monster purring at its toil;
These naked iron muscles dripping oil

And the sure-fingered rods that never miss.
This long and shining flank of metal is
Magic that greasy labor cannot spoil;
While this vast engine that could rend the soil
Conceals its fury with a gentle hiss.
It does not vent its loathing, does not turn
Upon its makers with destroying hate.
It bears a deeper malice; lives to earn
Its masters bread and laughs to see this great
Lord of the earth, who rules but cannot learn,
Become the slave of what his slaves create.

ROAST LEVIATHAN

"Old Jews! " Well, David, arent we?
What news is that to make you see so red,
To swear and almost tear your beard in half?
Jeered at? Well, let them laugh.
You can laugh longer when youre dead.
What? Are you still too blind to see?
Have you forgot your Midrash!. They were right,
The little goyim, with their angry stones.
You should be buried in the desert out of sight
And not a dog should howl miscarried moans
Over your foul bones.
Have you forgotten what is promised us,
Because of stinking days and rotting nights?
Eternal feasting, drinking, blazing lights
With endless leisure, periods of play!
Supernal pleasures, myriads of gay
Discussions, great debates with prophet-kings!
And rings of riddling scholars all surrounding
God who sits in the very middle, expounding
The Torah. Now your dull eyes glisten!
Listen: It is the final Day.
A blast of Gabriels horn has torn away
The last haze from our eyes, and we can see
Past the three hundred skies and gaze upon
The Ineffable Name engraved deep in the sun.
Now one by one, the pious and the just
Are seated by us, radiantly risen
From their dull prison in the dust.
And then the festival begins!
A sudden music spins great webs of sound
Spanning the ground, the stars and their companions;
While from the cliffs and canons of blue air,
Prayers of all colors, cries of exultation

Rise into choruses of singing gold.
And at the height of this bright consecration,
The whole Creations rolled before us.
The seven burning heavens unfold.
We see the first (the only one we know)
Dispersed and, shining through,
The other six declining: Those that hold
The stars and moons, together with all those
Containing rain and fire and sullen weather;
Cellars of dew-fall higher than the brim;
Huge arsenals with centuries of snows; Infinite rows of storms and swarms of seraphim.
Divided now are winds and waters. Sea and land,
Tohu and Bohu, light and darkness, stand
Upright on either hand.
And down this terrible aisle,
While heavens ranges roar aghast,
Pours a vast file of strange and hidden things:
Forbidden monsters, crocodiles with wings
And perfumed flesh that sings and glows
With more fresh colors than the rainbow knows.
The reem, those great beasts with eighteen horns,
Who mate but once in seventy years and die
In their own tears which flow ten stadia high.
The shamir, made by God on the sixth morn,
No longer than a grain of barley corn
But stronger than the bull of Bashan and so hard
It cuts through diamonds. Meshed and starred
With precious stones, there struts the shattering ziz
Whose groans are wrinkled thunder.
For thrice three hundred years the full parade
Files past, a cavalcade of fear and wonder.
And then the vast aisle clears.
Now comes our constantly increased reward.
The Lord commands that monstrous beast,
Leviathan, to be our feast.
What cheers ascend from horde on ravenous horde!
One hears the towering creature rend the seas,
Frustrated, cowering, and his pleas ignored.
In vain his great, belated tears are poured–
For this he was created, kept and nursed.
Cries burst from all the millions that attend:
"Ascend, Leviathan, it is the end!
We hunger and we thirst! Ascend! ".
Observe him first, my friend.

Gods deathless plaything rolls an eye
Five hundred thousand cubits high.
The smallest scale upon his tail
Could hide six dolphins and a whale.
His nostrils breathe–and on the spot
The churning waves turn seething hot.
If he be hungry, one huge fin
Drives seven thousand fishes in;
And when he drinks what he may need,
The rivers of the earth recede.
Yet he is more than huge and strong
Twelve brilliant colors play along
His sides until, compared to him,
The naked, burning sun seems dim.
New scintillating rays extend
Through endless singing space and rise
Into an ecstasy that cries:
"Ascend, Leviathan, ascend!"
God now commands the multi-colored bands
Of angels to intrude and slay the beast
That His good sons may have a feast of food.
But as they come, Leviathan sneezes twice.
And, numb with sudden pangs, each arm hangs slack.
Black terror seizes them; blood freezes into ice
And every angel flees from the attack!
God, with a look that spells eternal law,
Compels them back.
But, though they fight and smite him tail and jaw,
Nothing avails; upon his scales their swords
Break like frayed cords or, like a blade of straw,
Bend towards the hilt and wilt like faded grass.
Defeat and fresh retreat. But once again
Gods murmurs pass among them and they mass
With firmer steps upon the crowded plain.
Vast clouds of spears and stones rise from the ground;
But every dart flies past and rocks rebound
To the disheartened angels falling around.
A pause.
The angel host withdraws
With empty boasts throughout its sullen files.
Suddenly God smiles.
On the walls of heaven a tumble of light is caught.
Low thunder rumbles like an afterthought;
And Gods slow laughter calls:
"Behemot!"

Behemot, sweating blood,
Uses for his daily food
All the fodder, flesh and juice
That twelve tall mountains can produce.
Jordan, flooded to the brim,
Is a single gulp to him;
Two great streams from Paradise
Cool his lips and scarce suffice.
When he shifts from side to side
Earthquakes gape and open wide;
When a nightmare makes him snore,
All the dead volcanoes roar.
In the space between each toe,
Kingdoms rise and saviours go;
Epochs fall and causes die
In the lifting of his eye.
Wars and justice, love and death,
These are but his wasted breath;
Chews a planet for his cud
Behemot sweating blood.
Roused from his unconcern,
Behemot burns with anger.
Dripping sleep and languor from his heavy haunches,
He turns from deep disdain and launches
Himself upon the thickening air,
And, with weird cries of sickening despair,
Flies at Leviathan.
None can surmise the struggle that ensues–
The eyes lose sight of it and words refuse
To tell the story in its gory might.
Night passes after night,
And still the fight continues, still the sparks
Fly from the iron sinews,. till the marks
Of fire and belching thunder fill the dark
And, almost torn asunder, one falls stark,
Hammering upon the other!.
What clamor now is born, what crashings rise!
Hot lightnings lash the skies and frightening cries
Clash with the hymns of saints and seraphim.
The bloody limbs thrash through a ruddy dusk,
Till one great tusk of Behemot has gored
Leviathan, restored to his full strength,
Who, dealing fiercer blows in those last throes,
Closes on reeling Behemot at length–
Piercing him with steel-pointed claws,

Straight through the jaws to his disjointed head.
And both lie dead.
    Then come the angels!
With hoists and levers, joists and poles,
With knives and cleavers, ropes and saws,
Down the long slopes to the gaping maws,
The angels hasten; hacking and carving,
So nought will be lacking for the starving
Chosen of God, who in frozen wonderment
Realize now what the terrible thunder meant.
How their mouths water while they are looking
At miles of slaughter and sniffing the cooking!
Whiffs of delectable fragrance swim by;
Spice-laden vagrants that float and entice,
Tickling the throat and brimming the eye.
Ah! what rejoicing and crackling and roasting!
Ah! How the boys sing as, cackling and boasting,
The angels old wives and their nervous assistants
Run in to serve us.
    And while we are toasting The Fairest of All, they call from the distance–
    The rare ones of Time, they share our enjoyment;
    Their only employment to bear jars of wine
    And shine like the stars in a circle of glory.
    Here sways Rebekah accompanied by Zilpah;
    Miriam plays to the singing of Bilhah;
    Hagar has tales for us, Judith her story;
    Esther exhales bright romances and musk.
    There, in the dusky light, Salome dances.
    Sara and Rachel and Leah and Ruth,
    Fairer than ever and all in their youth,
    Come at our call and go by our leave.
    And, from her bower of beauty, walks Eve
    While, with the voice of a flower, she sings
    Of Eden, young earth and the birth of all things.
    Peace without end.
    Peace will descend on us, discord will cease;
And we, now so wretched, will lie stretched out
Free of old doubt, on our cushions of ease.
And, like a gold canopy over our bed,
The skin of Leviathan, tail-tip to head,
Soon will be spread till it covers the skies.
Light will still rise from it; millions of bright
Facets of brilliance, shaming the white
Glass of the moon, inflaming the night.

So Time shall pass and rest and pass again,
Burn with an endless zest and then return,
Walk at our side and tide us to new joys;
Gods voice to guide us, beauty as our staff. Thus shall Life be when Death has disappeared.
Jeered at? Well, let them laugh.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

A REBEL

Tie a bandage over his eyes,
And at his feet
Let rifles drearily patter
Their death-prayers of defeat.
Throw a blanket over his body,
It need no longer stir;
Truth will but stand the stronger
For all who died for her.
Now he has broken through
To his own secret place;
Which, if we dared to do,
We would have no more power left to look
on that dead face.

THE ROCK

This rock, too, was a word;
A word of flame and force when that which hurled
The stars into their places in the night
First stirred.
And, in the summers heat,
Lay not your hand on it, for while the iron hours beat
Gray anvils in the sky, it glows again
With unfulfilled desire.
Touch it not; let it stand
Ragged, forlorn, still looking at the land;
The dry blue chaos of mountains in the distance,
The slender blades of grass it shelters are Its own dark thoughts of what is near and far.
Your thoughts are yours, too; naked let them stand. BLUE WATER
Sea-violins are playing on the sands;
Curved bows of blue and white are flying over the pebbles. See them attack the chords–dark basses, glinting trebles.
Dimly and faint they croon, blue violins. " Suffer without regret," they seem to cry, "Though dark your suffering is, it may be music. Waves of blue heat that wash midsummer sky; Sea-violins that play along the sands."

PRAYERS FOR WIND

Let the winds come,
And bury our feet in the sands of seven deserts;

Let strong breezes rise,
Washing our ears with the far-off sounds of the foam.
Let there be between our faces
Green turf and a branch or two of back-tossed trees;
Set firmly over questioning hearts
The deep unquenchable answer of the wind.

IMPROMPTU

My mind is a puddle in the street reflecting green
Sirius; In thick dark groves trees huddle lifting their branches like beckoning hands. We eat the grain, the grain is death, all goes back to the earths dark mass. All but a song which moves across the plain like the winds deep-muttering breath. Bowed down upon the earth, man sets his plants and watches for the seed, Though he be part of the tragic pageant of the sky, no heaven will aid his mortal need. I find flame in the dust, a word once uttered that will stir again, And a wine-cup reflecting Sirius in the water held in my hands.

CHINESE POET AMONG BARBARIANS

The rain drives, drives endlessly,
Heavy threads of rain;
The wind beats at the shutters,
The surf drums on the shore:
Drunken telegraph poles lean sideways;
Dank summer cottages gloom hopelessly;
Bleak factory-chimneys are etched on the filmy distance,
Tepid with rain.
It seems I have lived for a hundred years
Among these things;
And it is useless for me now to make complaint against them.
For I know I shall never escape from this dull barbarian country,
Where there is none now left to lift a cool jade winecup,
Or share with me a single human thought.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS

Higher and still more high,
Palaces made for cloud,
Above the dingy city-roofs
Blue-white like angels with broad wings,
Pillars of the sky at rest
The mountains from the great plateau
Uprise.
But the world heeds them not;
They have been here now for too long a time.
The world makes war on them,
Tunnels their granite cliffs,
Splits down their shining sides,
Plasters their cliffs with soap-advertisements,
Destroys the lonely fragments of their peace.

Vaster and still more vast,
Peak after peak, pile after pile,
Wilderness still untamed,
To which the future is as was the past,
Barrier spread by Gods,
Sunning their shining foreheads,
Barrier broken down by those who do not need
The joy of time-resisting storm-worn stone,
The mountains swing along
The south horizon of the sky;
Welcoming with wide floors of blue-green ice
The mists that dance and drive before the sun.

THE FUTURE

After ten thousand centuries have gone,
Man will ascend the last long pass to know
That all the summits which he saw at dawn
Are buried deep in everlasting snow.

Below him endless gloomy valleys, chill,

Will wreathe and whirl with fighting cloud, driven by the winds fierce breath; But on the summit, wind and cloud are still:–Only the sunlight, and death.

And staggering up to the brink of the gulf man will look down

And painfully strive with weak sight to explore The silent gulfs below which the long shadows drown; Through every one of these he passed before.

Then since he has no further heights to climb,
And naught to witness he has come this endless way,
On the wind-bitten ice cap he will wait for the last of time, And watch the crimson sunrays fading of the worlds latest day: And blazing stars will burst upon him there, Dumb in the midnight of his hope and pain, Speeding no answer back to his last prayer, And, if akin to him, akin in vain.

UPON THE HILL

A Hundred miles of landscape spread before me like a fan: Hills behind naked hills, bronze light of evening on them shed: How many thousand ages have these summits spied on man? How many thousand times shall I look on them ere this fire in me is dead?

THE ENDURING If the autumn ended
Ere the birds flew southward,
If in the cold with weary throats
They vainly strove to sing,
Winter would be eternal;
Leaf and bush and blossom
Would never once more riot
In the spring.

If remembrance ended

When life and love are gathered, If the world were not living

Long after one is gone,

Song would not ring, nor sorrow
Stand at the door in evening;
Life would vanish and slacken,
Men would be changed to stone.
But there will be autumns bounty
Dropping upon our weariness,
There will be hopes unspoken
And joys to haunt us still;
There will be dawn and sunset
Though we have cast the world away,
And the leaves dancing
Over the hill.

JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER

OLD MAN

When an old man walks with lowered head
And eyes that do not seem to see,
I wonder does he ponder on
The worm he was or is to be.
Or has he turned his gaze within,
Lost to his own vicinity;
Erecting in a doubtful dream
Frail bridges to Infinity.

TONE PICTURE (Malipiero: Impressioni Dal Vero)

Across the hot square, where the barbaric sun
Pours coarse laughter on the crowds,
Trumpets throw their loud nooses
From corner to corner.
Elephants, whose indifferent backs
Heave with red lambrequins,
Tigers with golden muzzles,
Negresses, greased and turbaned in green and yellow,
Weave and interweave in the merciless glare of noon.
The sun flicks here and there like a throned tyrant,
Snapping his whip.
From amber platters, the smells ascend
Of overripe peaches mingled with dust and heated oils.
Pages in purple run madly about,
Rolling their eyes and grinning with huge, frightened mouths.
And from a high window–a square of black velvet–
A haughty figure stands back in the shadow,
Aloof and silent.

THEY SAY–

They say I have a constant heart, who know
Not anything of how it turns and yields

First here, first there; nor how in separate fields It runs to reap and then remains to sow;
How, with quick worship, it will bend and glow
Before a line of song, an antique vase,
Evening at sea; or in a well-loved face
Seek and find all that Beauty can bestow.
Yet they do well who name it with a name,
For all its rash surrenders call it true.
Though many lamps be lit, yet flame is flame;
The sun can show the way, a candle too.
The tribute to each fragment is the same
Service to all of Beauty–and her due.
RESCUE
Wind and wave and the swinging rope
Were calling me last night;
None to save and little hope,
No inner light.
Each snarling lash of the stormy sea
Curled like a hungry tongue.
One desperate splash–and no use to me
The noose that swung!
Death reached out three crooked claws
To still my clamoring pain.
I wheeled about, and Lifes gray jaws
Grinned once again.
To sea I gazed, and then I turned
Stricken toward the shore,
Praying half-crazed to a moon that burned
Above your door.
And at your door, you discovered me;
And at your heart, I sobbed.
And if there be more of eternity
Let me be robbed.
Let me be clipped of that heritage
And burned for ages through;
Freed and stripped of my fear and rage–
But not of you.
MATER IN EXTREMIS I Stand between them and the outer winds.
But I am a crumbling wall.
They told me they could bear the blast alone,
They told me: that was all.
But I must wedge myself between
Them and the first snowfall.
Riddled am I by onslaughts and attacks I thought I could forestall; I reared and braced myself to shelter them

Before I heard them call.
I cry them, God, a better shield!
I am about to fall.
SELF-REJECTED
Plow not nor plant this arid mound.
Here is no sap for seed,
No ferment for your need–
Ungrateful ground I
No sun can warm this spot
God has forgot;
No rain can penetrate
Its barren slate.
Demonic winds blow last years stubble
From its hard slope.
Go, leave the hopeless without hope;
Spare your trouble.
H. D.
HOLY SATYR

Most holy Satyr, like a goat, with horns and hooves to match thy coat of russet brown, I make leaf-circlets and a crown of honey-flowers for thy throat; where the amber petals drip to ivory, I cut and slip each stiffened petal in the rift of carven petal: honey horn has wed the bright virgin petal of the white flower cluster: lip to lip let them whisper, let them lilt, quivering:

Most holy Satyr,
like a goat,
hear this our song,
accept our leaves,
love-offering,
return our hymn; like echo fling a sweet song, answering note for note. LAIS

Let her who walks in Paphos
take the glass,
let Paphos take the mirror
and the work of frosted fruit,
gold apples set
with silver apple-leaf,
white leaf of silver
wrought with vein of gilt.

Let Paphos lift the mirror; let her look into the polished center of the disk.

Let Paphos take the mirror: did she press flowerlet of flame-flower to the lustrous white of the white forehead?

did the dark veins beat a deeper purple than the wine-deep tint of the dark flower?

Did she deck black hair, one evening, with the winter-white flower of the winter-berry? Did she look (reft of her lover) at a face gone white under the chaplet of white virgin-breath?

Lais, exultant, tyrannizing Greece,

Lais who kept her lovers in the porch, lover on lover waiting (but to creep where the robe brushed the threshold where still sleeps Lais), so she creeps, Lais, to lay her mirror at the feet of her who reigns in Paphos.

Lais has left her mirror, for she sees no longer in its depth the Lais self that laughed exultant, tyrannizing Greece.

Lais has left her mirror,
for she weeps no longer,
finding in its depth
a face, but other
than dark flame and white
feature of perfect marble.

Lais has left her mirror
(so one wrote)
to her who reigns in Paphos;

Lais who laughed a tyrant over Greece,

Lais who turned the lovers from the porch, that swarm for whom now

Lais has no use;

Lais is now no lover of the glass, seeing no more the face as once it was, wishing to see that face and finding this.

HELIODORA

He and I sought together,
over the spattered table,
rhymes and flowers,
gifts for a name.

He said, among others, I will bring (and the phrase was just and good, but not as good as mine)

"the narcissus that loves the rain."

We strove for a name, while the light of the lamps burnt thin and the outer dawn came in, a ghost, the last at the feast or the first, to sit within with the two that remained to quibble in flowers and verse over a girls name.

He said, " the rain loving,"
I said, " the narcissus, drunk,
drunk with the rain."

Yet I had lost for he said,

"the rose, the lovers gift, is loved of love,"

he said it,

"loved of love;"

I waited, even as he spoke, to see the room filled with a light, as when in winter the embers catch in a wind when a room is dank: so it would be filled, I thought, our room with a light when he said (and he said it first)

"the rose, the lovers delight, is loved of love,"

but the light was the same.

Then he caught, seeing the fire in my eyes, my fire, my fever, perhaps, for he leaned with the purple wine stained in his sleeve, and said this:

"Did you ever think a girls mouth caught in a kiss is a lily that laughs?"

I had not.
I saw it now as men must see it forever afterwards; no poet could write again,
"the red-lily, a girls laugh caught in a kiss;"
it was his to pour in the vat from which all poets dip and quaff, for poets are brothers in this.

So I saw the fire in his eyes, it was almost my fire (he was younger) I saw the face so white; my heart beat, it was almost my phrase, I said, " surprise the muses, take them by surprise; it is late, rather it is dawn-rise, those ladies sleep, the nine, our own kings mistresses."

A name to rhyme, flowers to bring to a name, what was one girl faint and shy, with eyes like the myrtle (I said: "her underlids are rather like myrtle"), to vie with the nine?

Let him take the name, he had the rhymes,
"the rose, loved of love,"
"the lily, a mouth that laughs,"
he had the gift,
"the scented crocus, the purple hyacinth,"
what was one girl to the nine?
He said:
"I will make her a wreath;"
he said:

"I will write it thus: / will bring you the lily that laughs, I will twine with soft narcissus, the myrtle, sweet crocus, white violet, the purple hyacinth and, last, the rose, loved of love, that these may drip on your hair the less soft flowers, may mingle sweet with the sweet of Heliodoras locks, myrrh-curled."

(He wrote myrrh-curled,
I think, the first.) I said:
"they sleep, the nine,"
when he shouted swift and passionate:
"that for the nine!

Above the mountains the sun is about to wake, and to-day white violets shine beside white lilies adrift on the mountain side; to-day the narcissus opens that loves the rain."

I watched him to the door, catching his robe as the wine-bowl crashed to the floor, spilling a few wet lees (ah, his purple hyacinth!); I saw him out of the door, I thought: there will never be a poet, in all the centuries after this, who will dare write, after my friends verse,

"a girls mouth is a lily kissed."

TOWARD THE PIRAEUS

Slay with your eyes, Greek,
men over the face of the earth,
slay with your eyes, the host,
puny, passionless, weak.

Break, as the ranks of steel
broke of the Persian host:
craven, we hated them then:

now we would count them Gods
beside these, spawn of the earth.

Grant us your mantle, Greek; grant us but one to f right (as your eyes) with a sword, men, craven and weak, grant us but one to strike one blow for you, passionate Greek.

You would have broken my wings,
but the very fact that you knew
I had wings, set some seal
on my bitter heart, my heart
broke and fluttered and sang.

You would have snared me,
and scattered the strands of my nest;
but the very fact that you saw,
sheltered me, claimed me,
set me apart from the rest

Of men–of men made you a god, and me, claimed me, set me apart and the song in my breast, yours, yours forever- if I escape your evil heart.

I Loved you: men have writ and women have said they loved, but as the Pythoness stands by the altar, intense and may not move, till the fumes pass over; and may not falter nor break, till the priest has caught the words that mar or make a deme or a ravaged town; so I, though my knees tremble, my heart break, must note the rumbling, heed only the shuddering down in the fissure beneath the rock of the temple floor; must wait and watch and may not turn nor move, nor break from my trance to speak so slight, so sweet, so simple a word as love.

Ill

What had you done
had you been true,
I can not think,
I may not know.

What could we do
were I not wise,
what play invent,
what joy devise?

What could we do if you were great? (Yet were you lost, who were there, then, to circumvent the tricks of men?)

What can we do, for curious lies have filled your heart, and in my eyes sorrow has writ that I am wise.

If I had been a boy, I would have worshiped your grace, I would have flung my worship before your feet, I would have followed apart, glad, rent with an ecstasy to watch you turn your great head, set on the throat, thick, dark with its sinews, burned and wrought like the olive stalk, and the noble chin and the throat.

I would have stood, and watched and watched and burned, and when in the night, from the many hosts, your slaves, and warriors and serving men you had turned to the purple couch and the flame of the woman, tall like cypress tree that flames sudden and swift and free as with crackle of golden resin and cones and the locks flung free like the cypress limbs, bound, caught and shaken and loosed, bound, caught and riven

and bound and loosened again, as in rain of a kingly storm or wind full from a desert plain.

So, when you had risen from all the lethargy of love and its heat, you would have summoned me, me alone, and found my hands, beyond all the hands in the world, cold, cold, cold, intolerably cold and sweet.

It was not chastity that made me cold nor fear,
only I knew that you, like myself, were sick
of the puny race that crawls and quibbles and lisps
of love and love and lovers and loves deceit.

It was not chastity that made me wild but fear
that my weapon, tempered in different heat,
was over-matched by yours, and your hand
skilled to yield death-blows, might break

With the slightest turn–no ill-will meant–
my own lesser, yet still somewhat fine-wrought
fiery-tempered, delicate, over-passionate steel.

CONRAD AIKEN

SEVEN TWILIGHTS

The ragged pilgrim, on the road to nowhere,
Waits at the granite milestone. It grows dark.
Willows lean by the water. Pleas of water
Cry through the trees. And on the boles and boughs
Green water-lights make rings, already paling.
Leaves speak everywhere. The willow leaves
Silverly stir on the breath of moving water,
Birch-leaves, beyond them, twinkle, and there on the hill,

And the hills beyond again, and the highest hill,
Serrated pines, in the dusk, grow almost black.
By the eighth milestone on the road to nowhere
He drops his sack, and lights once more the pipe
There often lighted. In the dusk-sharpened sky
A pair of night-hawks windily sweep, or fall,
Booming, toward the trees. Thus had it been
Last year, and the year before, and many years:
Ever the same. "Thus turns the human track
Backward upon itself, I stand once more
By this small stream." Now the rich sound of leaves,

Turning in air to sway their heavy boughs,
Burns in his heart, sings in his veins, as spring
Flowers in veins of trees; bringing such peace
As comes to seamen when they dream of seas.
"O trees! exquisite dancers in gray twilight!
Witches! fairies! elves! who wait for the moon
To thrust her golden horn, like a golden snail,
Above that mountain–arch your green benediction

Once more over my heart. Muffle the sound of bells,
Mournfully human, that cries from the darkening valley;
Close, with your leaves, about the sound of water: Take me among your hearts as you take the mist Among your boughs!". Now by the granite milestone,
On the ancient human road that winds to nowhere,
The pilgrim listens, as the night air brings
The murmured echo, perpetual, from the gorge
Of barren rock far down the valley. Now,
Though twilight here, it may be starlight there;
Mist makes elfin lakes in the hollow fields;
The dark wood stands in the mist like a somber island With one red star above it. "
This I should see,
Should I go on, follow the falling road,–
This I have often seen. But I shall stay
Here, where the ancient milestone, like a watchman,
Lifts up its figure eight, its one gray knowledge,
Into the twilight; as a watchman lifts
A lantern, which he does not know is out."
Now by the wall of the ancient town I lean
Myself, like ancient wall and dust and sky,
And the purple dusk, grown old, grown old in heart.
Shadows of clouds flow inward from the sea.
The mottled fields grow dark. The golden wall
Grows gray again, turns stone again, the tower,
No longer kindled, darkens against a cloud.
Old is the world, old as the world am I;
The cries of sheep rise upward from the fields,
Forlorn and strange; and wake an ancient echo
In fields my heart has known, but has not seen.
"These fields "–an unknown voice beyond the wall
Murmurs–" were once the province of the sea.
Where now the sheep graze, mermaids were at play,
Sea-horses galloped, and the great jeweled tortoise
Walked slowly, looking upward at the waves,
Bearing upon his back a thousand barnacles,
A white acropolis." The ancient tower
Sends out, above the houses and the trees,
And the wide fields below the ancient walls,
A measured phrase of bells. And in the silence
I hear a womans voice make answer then:
"Well, they are green, although no ship can sail them.
Sky-larks rest in the grass, and start up singing
Before the girl who stoops to pick sea-poppies.
Spiny, the poppies are, and oh how yellow!

And the brown clay is runneled by the rain."
A moment since, the sheep that crop the grass
Had long blue shadows, and the grass-tips sparkled:
Now all grows old. O voices strangely speaking,
Voices of man and woman, voices of bells,
Diversely making comment on our time
Which flows and bears us with it into dusk,
Repeat the things you say! Repeat them slowly
Upon this air, make them an incantation
For ancient tower, old wall, the purple twilight,
This dust, and me. But all I hear is silence,
And something that may be leaves or may be sea.

III

When the tree bares, the music of it changes:
Hard and keen is the sound, long and mournful;
Pale are the poplar boughs in the evening light
Above my house, against a slate-cold cloud.
When the house ages and the tenants leave it,
Cricket sings in the tall grass by the threshold;
Spider, by the cold mantel, hangs his web.
Here, in a hundred years from that clear season
When first I came here, bearing lights and music,
To this old ghostly house my ghost will come,–
Pause in the half-light, turn by the poplar, glide
Above tall grasses through the broken door.
Who will say that he saw–or the dusk deceived him–
A mist with hands of mist blow down from the tree
And open the door and enter and close it after?
Who will say that he saw, as midnight struck
Its tremulous golden twelve, a light in the window,
And first heard music, as of an old piano,
Music remote, as if it came from the earth,
Far down; and then, in the quiet, eager voices?
". Houses grow old and die, houses have ghosts–
Once in a hundred years we return, old house,
And live once more.". And then the ancient answer, In a voice not human, but more like creak of boards Or rattle of panes in the wind–" Not as the owner,
But as a guest you come, to fires not lit
By hands of yours. Through these long-silent chambers
Move slowly, turn, return, and bring once more
Your lights and music. It will be good to talk."
"This is the hour," she said, " of transmutation:
It is the eucharist of the evening, changing
All things to beauty. Now the ancient river,
That all day under the arch was polished jade,

Becomes the ghost of a river, thinly gleaming
Under a silver cloud. It is not water:
It is that azure stream in which the stars
Bathe at the daybreak, and become immortal."
"And the moon," said I–not thus to be outdone–
"What of the moon? Over the dusty plane-trees
Which crouch in the dusk above their feeble lanterns,
Each coldly lighted by his tiny faith;
The moon, the waxen moon, now almost full,
Creeps whitely up. Westward the waves of cloud,
Vermilion, crimson, violet, stream on the air,
Shatter to golden flakes in the icy green
Translucency of twilight. And the moon
Drinks up their light, and as they fade or darken,
Brightens. O monstrous miracle of the twilight,
That one should live because the others die! "
"Strange too," she answered, " that upon this azure
Pale-gleaming ghostly stream, impalpable–
So faint, so fine that scarcely it bears up
The petals that the lantern strews upon it,–
These great black barges float like apparitions,
Loom in the silver of it, beat upon it,
Moving upon it as dragons move on air."
"Thus always," then I answered,–looking never
Toward her face, so beautiful and strange It grew, with feeding on the evening light,–
"The gross is given, by inscrutable God,
Power to beat wide wings upon the subtle.
Thus we ourselves, so fleshly, fallible, mortal,
Stand here, for all our foolishness, transfigured:
Hung over nothing in an arch of light
While one more evening like a wave of silence
Gathers the stars together and goes out."
Now the great wheel of darkness and low clouds
Whirs and whirls in the heavens with dipping rim;
Against the ice-white wall of light in the west
Skeleton trees bow down in a stream of air.
Leaves, black leaves and smoke, are blown on the wind;
Mount upward past my window; swoop again;
In a sharp silence, loudly, loudly falls
The first cold drop, striking a shriveled leaf.
Doom and dusk for the earth! Upward I reach
To draw chill curtains and shut out the dark,
Pausing an instant, with uplifted hand,
To watch, between black ruined portals of cloud,

One star,–the tottering portals fall and crush it.
Here are a thousand books! here is the wisdom
Alembicked out of dust, or out of nothing;
Choose now the weightiest word, most golden page,
Most somberly musicked line; hold up these lanterns,–
    These paltry lanterns, wisdoms, philosophies,–
Above your eyes, against this wall of darkness;
And youll see–what? One hanging strand of cobweb,
    A window-sill a half-inch deep in dust.
Speak out, old wise-men! Now, if ever, we need you.
Cry loudly, lift shrill voices like magicians
Against this baleful dusk, this wail of rain.
    But you are nothing! Your pages turn to water
Under my fingers: cold, cold and gleaming,
Arrowy in the darkness, rippling, dripping–
All things are rain. Myself, this lighted room,
What are we but a murmurous pool of rain?.
The slow arpeggios of it, liquid, sibilant,
Thrill and thrill in the dark. World-deep I lie
Under a sky of rain. Thus lies the sea-shell
Under the rustling twilight of the sea;
No gods remember it, no understanding
Cleaves the long darkness with a sword of light.
    Heaven, you say, will be a field in April,
A friendly field, a long green wave of earth,
With one domed cloud above it. There youll lie
In noons delight, with bees to flash above you,
Drown amid buttercups that blaze in the wind,
Forgetting all save beauty. There youll see
With sun-filled eyes your one great dome of cloud
Adding fantastic towers and spires of light,
Ascending, like a ghost, to melt in the blue.
Heaven enough, in truth, if you were there!
Could I be with you I would choose your noon,
Drown amid buttercups, laugh with the intimate grass,
    Dream there forever. But, being older, sadder,
Having not you, nor aught save thought of you,
It is not spring Ill choose, but fading summer;
Not noon Ill choose, but the charmed hour of dusk.
Poppies? A few! And a moon almost as red.
But most Ill choose that subtler dusk that comes
Into the mind–into the heart, you say–
When, as we look bewildered at lovely things,

Striving to give their loveliness a name,
They are forgotten; and other things, remembered,
Flower in the heart with the fragrance we call grief.
VII In the long silence of the sea, the seaman
Strikes twice his bell of bronze. The short note wavers
And loses itself in the blue realm of water.
One sea-gull, paired with a shadow, wheels, wheels;
Circles the lonely ship by wave and trough;
Lets down his feet, strikes at the breaking water,
Draws up his golden feet, beats wings, and rises
Over the mast. Light from a crimson cloud
Crimsons the sluggishly creeping foams of waves;
The seaman, poised in the bow, rises and falls
As the deep forefoot finds a way through waves;
And there below him, steadily gazing westward,
Facing the wind, the sunset, the long cloud,
The goddess of the ship, proud figurehead,
Smiles inscrutably, plunges to crying waters,
Emerges streaming, gleaming, with jewels falling
Fierily from carved wings and golden breasts;
Steadily glides a moment, then swoops again.
Carved by the hand of man, grieved by the wind;
Worn by the tumult of all the tragic seas,
Yet smiling still, unchanging, smiling still
Inscrutably, with calm eyes and golden brow–
What is it that she sees and follows always,
Beyond the molten and ruined west, beyond
The light-rimmed sea, the sky itself? What secret
Gives wisdom to her purpose? Now the cloud In final conflagration pales and crumbles
Into the darkening waters. Now the stars
Burn softly through the dusk. The seaman strikes
His small lost bell again, watching the west
As she below him watches. O pale goddess
Whom not the darkness, even, or rain or storm,
Changes; whose great wings are bright with foam,
Whose breasts are cold as the sea, whose eyes for-
ever Inscrutably take that light whereon they look–
Speak to us! Make us certain, as you are,
That somewhere, beyond wave and wave and wave,
That dreamed-of harbor lies which we would find.

TETELESTAI

How shall we praise the magnificence of the dead. The great man humbled, the haughty brought to dust?

Is there a horn we should not blow as proudly
For the meanest of us all, who creeps his days,

Guarding his heart from blows, to die obscurely?
I am no king, have laid no kingdoms waste,
Taken no princes captive, led no triumphs
Of weeping women through long walls of trumpets;
Say rather I am no one, or an atom;
Say rather, two great gods in a vault of starlight
Play ponderingly at chess; and at the games end
One of the pieces, shaken, falls to the floor
And runs to the darkest corner; and that piece
Forgotten there, left motionless, is I.
Say that I have no name, no gifts, no power,
Am only one of millions, mostly silent;
One who came with lips and hands and a heart,
Looked on beauty, and loved it, and then left it.
Say that the fates of time and space obscured me,
Led me a thousand ways to pain, bemused me,
Wrapped me in ugliness; and like great spiders
Dispatched me at their leisure. Well, what then?
    Should I not hear, as I lie down in dust,
The horns of glory blowing above my burial?
    Morning and evening opened and closed above me:
Houses were built above me; trees let fall
Yellowing leaves upon me, hands of ghosts,
Rain has showered its arrows of silver upon me
Seeking my heart; winds have roared and tossed me;
Music in long blue waves of sound has borne me
A helpless weed to shores of unthought silence;
Time, above me, within me, crashed its gongs
Of terrible warning, sifting the dust of death;
And here I lie. Blow now your horns of glory
Harshly over my flesh, you trees, you waters!
You stars and suns, Canopus, Deneb, Rigel,
Let me, as I lie down, here in this dust,
Hear, far off, your whispered salutation!
Roar now above my decaying flesh, you winds,
Whirl out your earth-scents over this body, tell me
Of ferns and stagnant pools, wild roses, hillsides!
Anoint me, rain, let crash your silver arrows
On this hard flesh! I am the one who named you,
I lived in you, and now I die in you.
I, your son, your daughter, treader of music,
Lie broken, conquered. Let me not fall in
silence.
    III I, the restless one; the circler of circles;
Herdsman and roper of stars, who could not capture

The secret of self; I who was tyrant to weaklings,
Striker of children; destroyer of women; corrupter
Of innocent dreamers, and laugher at beauty; I,
Too easily brought to tears and weakness by music,
Baffled and broken by love, the helpless beholder
Of the war in my heart of desire with desire, the struggle
Of hatred with love, terror with hunger; I
Who laughed without knowing the cause of my laughter, who grew
Without wishing to grow, a servant to my own body; Loved without reason the laughter and flesh of a woman,
Enduring such torments to find her! I who at last Grow weaker, struggle more feebly, relent in my purpose,
Choose for my triumph an easier end, look backward
At earlier conquests; or, caught in the web, cry out
In a sudden and empty despair, "Tetelestai! "
Pity me, now! I, who was arrogant, beg you!
Tell me, as I lie down, that I was courageous.
Blow horns of victory now, as I reel and am vanquished.
Shatter the sky with trumpets above my grave.

. Look! this flesh how it crumbles to dust and is blown! These bones, how they grind in the granite of frost and are nothing! This skull, how it yawns for a flicker of time in the darkness Yet laughs not and sees not! It is crushed by a hammer of sunlight, And the hands are destroyed. Press down through the leaves of the jasmine, Dig through the interlaced roots–nevermore will you find me: I was no better than dust. yet you cannot replace me. Take the soft dust in your hand–does it stir: does it sing? Has it lips and a heart? Does it open its eyes to the sun? Does it run, does it dream, does it burn with a secret, or tremble In terror of death? Or ache with tremendous decisions?. Listen!. It says: "I lean by the river. The willows Are yellowed with bud. White clouds roar up from the south
And darken the ripples; but they cannot darken my heart,
Nor the face like a star in my heart!. Rain falls on the water
And pelts it, and rings it with silver. The willow trees glisten,
The sparrows chirp under the eaves; but the face in my heart Is a secret of music. I wait in the rain and am silent."
Listen again!. It says: "I have worked, I am tired,
The pencil dulls in my hand: I see through the window
Walls upon walls of windows with faces behind them,
Smoke floating up to the sky, an ascension of seagulls.
I am tired. I have struggled in vain, my decision was fruitless,
Why then do I wait? with darkness, so easy, at hand!.
But to-morrow, perhaps. I will wait and endure till to-morrow!."
Or again: "It is dark. The decision is made. I am vanquished
By terror of life. The walls mount slowly about me In coldness. I had not the courage. I was forsaken.

I cried out, was answered by silence. Teteles-tai!."

Hear how it babbles!–Blow the dust out of your hand, With its voices and visions, tread on it, forget it, turn homeward With dreams in your brain. This, then, is the humble, the nameless,–The lover, the husband and father, the struggler with shadows, The one who went down under shoutings of chaos!

The weakling

Who cried his " forsaken! " like Christ on the darkening hilltop!. This, then, is the one who implores, as he dwindles to silence, A fanfare of glory. And which of us dares to deny him!

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

EIGHT SONNETS

When you, that at this moment are to me
Dearer than words on paper, shall depart,
And be no more the warder of my heart,
Whereof again myself shall hold the key;
And be no more, what now you seem to be,
The sun, from which all excellencies start
In a round nimbus, nor a broken dart
Of moonlight, even, splintered on the sea; I shall remember only of this hour–
And weep somewhat, as now you see me weep–
The pathos of your love, that, like a flower,
Fearful of death yet amorous of sleep,
Droops for a moment and beholds, dismayed,
The wind whereon its petals shall be laid.

Whats this of death, from you who never will die?

Think you the wrist that fashioned you in clay,

The thumb that set the hollow just that way In your full throat and lidded the long eye

So roundly from the forehead, will let lie

Broken, forgotten, under foot some day

Your unimpeachable body, and so slay

The work he most had been remembered by?

I tell you this: whatever of dust to dust

Goes down, whatever of ashes may return

To its essential self in its own season,

Loveliness such as yours will not be lost,

But, cast in bronze upon his very urn,

Make known him Master, and for what good reason. III I know I am but summer to your heart,
And not the full four seasons of the year;
And you must welcome from another part
Such noble moods as are not mine, my dear.
No gracious weight of golden fruits to sell
Have I, nor any wise and wintry thing;

And I have loved you all too long and well
To carry still the high sweet breast of spring.
Wherefore I say: O love, as summer goes,
I must be gone, steal forth with silent drums,
That you may hail anew the bird and rose
When I come back to you, as summer comes.
Else will you seek, at some not distant time,
Even your summer in another clime.
Here is a wound that never will heal, I know,
Being wrought not of a dearness and a death
But of a love turned ashes and the breath
Gone out of beauty; never again will grow
The grass on that scarred acre, though I sow
Young seed there yearly and the sky bequeath
Its friendly weathers down, far underneath
Shall be such bitterness of an old woe.
That April should be shattered by a gust,
That August should be leveled by a rain,
I can endure, and that the lifted dust
Of man should settle to the earth again;
But that a dream can die, will be a thrust
Between my ribs forever of hot pain.
What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts to-night, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply;
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain,
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone;
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.
Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare.
Let all who prate of Beauty hold their peace,
And lay them prone upon the earth and cease
To ponder on themselves, the while they stare
At nothing, intricately drawn nowhere
In shapes of shifting lineage; let geese
Gabble and hiss, but heroes seek release
From dusty bondage into luminous air.

O blinding hour, O holy, terrible day,
When first the shaft into his vision shone
Of light anatomized! Euclid alone
Has looked on Beauty bare. Fortunate they
Who, though once only and then but far away,
Have heard her massive sandal set on stone.

VII

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!
Give back my book and take my kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard?–
"What a big book for such a little head! "
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink.
Oh, I shall love you still and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more;
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.

VIII

Say what you will, and scratch my heart to find
The roots of last years roses in my breast;
I am as surely riper in my mind
As if the fruit stood in the stalls confessed.
Laugh at the unshed leaf, say what you will,
Call me in all things what I was before,
A flutterer in the wind, a woman still;
I tell you I am what I was and more.
My branches weigh me down, frost cleans the air,
My sky is black with small birds bearing south;
Say what you will, confuse me with fine care,
Put by my word as but an April truth,–
Autumn is no less on me that a rose
Hugs the brown bough and sighs before it goes.

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